

# The Beaver

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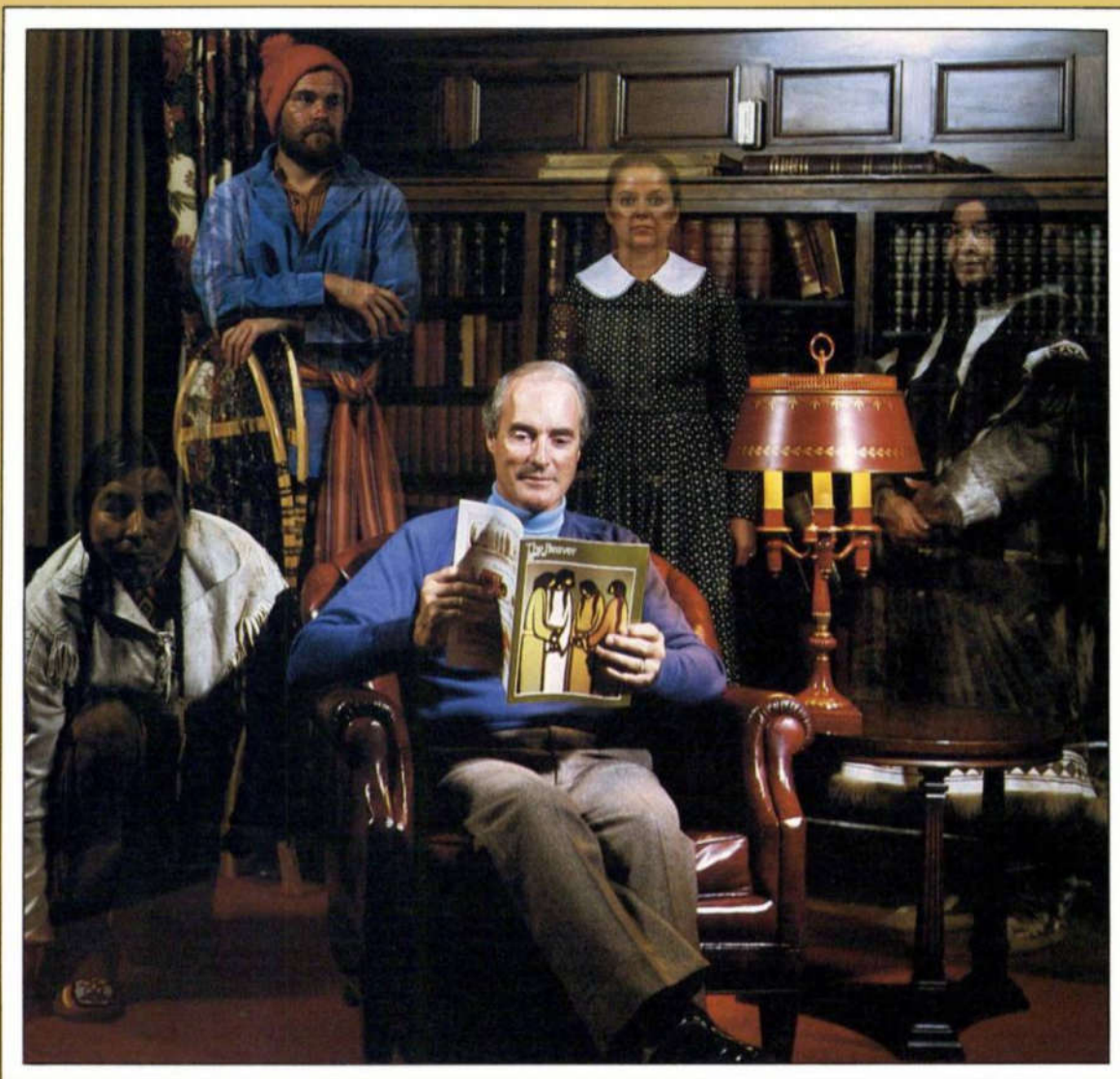


**Louisbourg: An Uncertain Future?**

**The Montagnais Indians • The Squire Takes a Musk-Ox**

**The Scandal of the Bremner Furs**

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## The Beaver

MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH

Subscription rate: \$18 year for 6 issues

77 Main Street, Winnipeg, Man. R3C 2R1

SUMMER 1985  
OUTFIT 316:1  
(Issued August 1985)  
\$3.50

# The Beaver

MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH

Editor: Helen Burgess  
Assistant Editor: Carol Preston



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**COVER:** Montagnaise de La Romaine. Oil painting by André Michel of Sept-Îles, 1979.

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY

HUDSON'S BAY HOUSE  
77 MAIN ST.

**Hudson's Bay Company**

WINNIPEG, CANADA  
R3C 2R1

Published by The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay, known as the Hudson's Bay Company. The interests of THE BEAVER cover the territory with which the Company has been or is now associated. Annual subscription (6 issues) \$18 (Canada and United States). Single Copy \$3.50. Other countries annual subscription \$24. While every care will be taken of manuscripts and illustrations submitted, no liability will be assumed for loss. Contents copyright. Printed in Canada.

Second class mail registration number 1401. Postage paid in Winnipeg.

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ISSN 0005-7517

3 / Summer 1985

# LOUISBOURG

## *The Twists of Time*

By A.J.B. Johnston

TODAY IT IS CANADA'S most ambitious historic park, and a major tourist attraction on the east coast. Its images — from a fog-enshrouded fleur-de-lis to distinctive streetscapes to a wide range of costumed animators — are ingrained in the Canadian consciousness. It is the fortress of Louisbourg, a federal government make-work project of the 1960s that has turned out to be an unqualified success, with heritage specialists and the general public alike.

The future of the fortress of Louisbourg, as an outdoor museum, would seem to be assured. Yet, if the history of Louisbourg itself is any guide, the future of the phoenix fortress is far from certain. Twenty-nine decades have passed since Louisbourg was founded by the French in 1713; over that period the site has played many roles: 32 years as a French fishing base and military stronghold, four years as an English garrison town, another nine as a French naval and military centre, nine more as an English garrison town, 127 years as an all but forgotten community of scattered houses and eighteenth-century ruins, and finally 89 years as a historic site. Since 1895 Louisbourg and the events associated with it have been commemorated in five different manners, with the reconstruction of the last twenty years being but the latest. As surely as clothing and hair-styles go in and out of fashion, so too do approaches to heritage commemoration. Where the past two decades have witnessed a Canada-wide growth in the number of outdoor museums (pioneer villages, working farms, saw mills), by the twenty-first century such places may no longer be major attractions. What they might be replaced with is anybody's guess. Nothing illustrates the changeability of attitudes toward the past more than the story of what happened on the site of the fortress of Louisbourg between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, as the

fortress moved from abandoned ruin to faithful reconstruction.

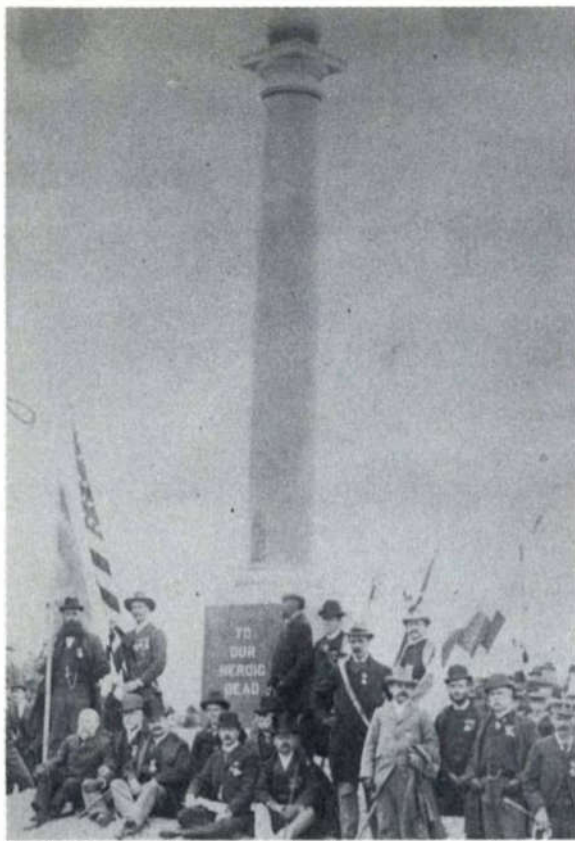
Louisbourg's life span as an economic and military bastion of New France measured little more than four decades. Yet within that brief life span its fortifications grew to rank among the most impressive in North America and its harbour among the busiest. Founded at the end of the reign of Louis XIV, Louis XV spent vast sums of royal money to build and defend the place: four million *livres* to fortify it; 16 million *livres* in other expenses. But the expenditures were an investment, not just in a strategic stronghold but also in a vital economic asset. The colony's cod fishery returned between two and three million *livres* a year and its commerce generated even more wealth. So important was Cape Breton to the French that Voltaire called it 'the key' to France's overseas possessions. The Minister of Marine, the Comte de Pontchartrain, agreed wholeheartedly: 'The Loss of this Island by France would be irreparable; as a necessary consequence, the rest of North America would have to be abandoned.'

Louisbourg's economic growth and strategic potential did not go unwatched. New Englanders, acutely aware of the havoc French warships and privateers could wreak among their trading and fishing vessels, were the first to organize a campaign against the fortress. In 1745, 4,000 provincial soldiers, accompanied by a fleet of over 100 colonial and Royal Navy vessels, laid siege to Louisbourg. Some Americans, knowing nothing of fortress warfare, were surprised the place was not quickly taken. Benjamin Franklin, wiser than most, wrote one besieger that he would be 'glad to hear that news three months hence. Fortified towns are hard nuts to crack; and your teeth have not been accustomed to it.' In fact, it took seven weeks to force a capitulation. When it finally came the victorious New Englanders were exultant. Declared one: 'It is the severest blow that could have been given to the enemy, and in the very tenderest part.'

Soon after Louisbourg fell all but a handful of the town's inhabitants, civilians and soldiers alike, were

*The author is a Parks Canada historian at the Fortress of Louisbourg, and author of 'The Summer of 1744: A Portrait of Life in 18th-Century Louisbourg'.*

*Photographs are from the Parks Canada Fortress of Louisbourg collection.*



The first 'permanent' memorial at Louisbourg commemorates the siege of 1745, when the French inhabitants at Louisbourg surrendered to New Englanders. The 26-foot column was raised by an American organization, The Society of Colonial Wars.

deported to France. The French fortress became an English garrison town. That occupation lasted until 1749 when the French returned to Louisbourg, by virtue of a treaty signed the year before between Great Britain and France. For eight years the French repaired and rebuilt the damaged sections of Louisbourg, and made plans to improve its defences. Before any significant improvements were carried out, however, the town came under attack for a second time. In the early summer of 1758, 13,000 British regulars, supported by a blockading fleet of over 30 warships and many other vessels, besieged the fortress. Once again Louisbourg was compelled to capitulate; once again the inhabitants were deported and it became an English garrison town.

In 1760, 117 Royal Miners carried out William Pitt's order to destroy the Louisbourg fortifications. Their work began in June and lasted until November as they slowly but steadily moved around the fortress, blowing up the walls the French had laboured for decades to construct. Houses and other buildings were spared, but the bomb-damaged town was in a decline from which it could not escape. In 1768 the British garrison withdrew, with the result that more than half of the 500 civilians who lived there in 1767 departed at the same time. In the words of the Governor of Nova Scotia, Lord William Campbell, Louisbourg had become a

*Now in the 1980s  
something has changed.  
Visitor totals are down.  
Will Louisbourg be left  
behind once more in the  
current rush to embrace  
the future?*

'decayed city . . . going to ruin'.

Some months before the British left Louisbourg a small group of officers and enlisted men decided that the great events that had occurred there, notably in 1758, deserved to be commemorated in some fashion. The leader of this group seems to have been Captain Samuel Holland, a Dutch-born military officer, surveyor and avid astronomer who erected an observatory at Louisbourg in the 1760s. Holland was a veteran soldier, having been at Louisbourg in 1758 as 'General Wolfe's Engineer' and at Quebec in 1759 where he was beside Wolfe when the latter died on the Plains of Abraham. Thinking it important to keep in memory important events from the past, Holland and a few others serving at Louisbourg resolved to raise a monument there, on the ruins of the Citadel, or King's Bastion area. The memorial was likely put up in 1767, which makes it among the first commemorative efforts undertaken in what is now Canada.

The only evidence for the 1767 Louisbourg monument comes from a letter Holland wrote in early 1768. There he described it as consisting of 'Hewen Stones of the Ruinous Fortifications' piled together. That made it undeniably crude, but an inscription was added and some of the larger stones were polished. Holland stated that he wished something more sophisticated could have been erected, but a lack of funds and workmen prevented it. As a result, it was executed in what he called 'the Rustick taste'.

Samuel Holland maintained that the Louisbourg monument, done in the style that it was, would be able to withstand 'the Injurys of Time'. That proved to be a naive affirmation. Not one of the many nineteenth-century descriptions of the ruins of Louisbourg mentioned it. Observers described the 'heaps of stone' they saw lying all about, but Holland's 'Rustick' memorial was apparently nowhere to be seen.

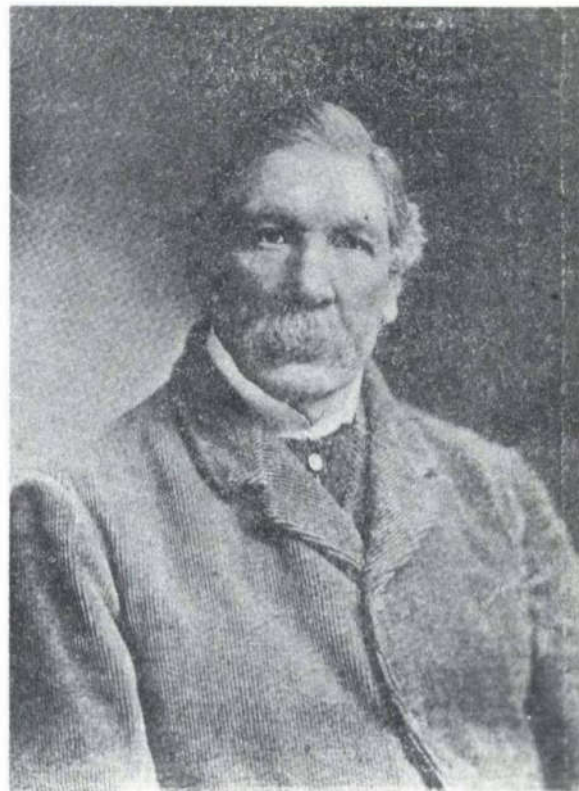
In the aftermath of the British departure in 1768 Louisbourg quickly faded from the world scene. Where for half a century it had figured in the calculations of international strategists, it suddenly became a small and all but forgotten fishing community. Most of those who stayed behind when the soldiers left, moved to

properties across and around the harbour, though some did remain where the original French town had been. By the turn of the nineteenth century that area presented a desolate picture, with its scattered houses, grazing animals and jumbled ruins. In 1805 the Reverend John Inglis, later Anglican Bishop of Nova Scotia, wrote:

A more complete destruction of buildings can scarcely be imagined. All are reduced to confused heaps of stone after all the wood, all that was combustible was either burnt or carried away. . . . The great size of the heaps of stone indicated the magnitude of the edifices . . . [I saw] the ruins of several barracks and hospitals, of the Intendant's and the admiral's house and various other public buildings . . . [The current residents] are exceedingly poor. In the town and vicinity [sic] there are fourteen families . . .

The situation changed little in the course of the nineteenth-century, though people's perspectives on the historic site did seem to alter. No longer were visitors (there were never very many) content simply to describe what the place looked like. In full romantic style, tourists from the 1830s onward found Louisbourg to be a place of 'melancholy desolation', 'intense loneliness' and 'grassy solitude'. It emerged as an ideal spot for romantic exhilaration and philosophical ruminations on the passage of time and the meaning of life. There were no calls to protect or clean up the area, but given the romanticism of the era that is not surprising. It was precisely the juxtaposition of old ruins with fences, fish flakes, houses and sheep, the contrast of a glorious past with a humble present, that captivated the nineteenth-century visitors.

What is a little surprising is that there were practically no calls for some form of commemoration at the Louisbourg site. Throughout the nineteenth-century monuments, memorials and statues enjoyed a great vogue in both Europe and North America. A column to Nelson, put up in Montreal in 1809, and Brock's Monument, erected on Queenston Heights in 1824, were among the earliest examples of the trend in British North America. By the end of the century dozens more had been raised across the country, dedicated to keeping in memory various battles, explorers and early heroes. Louisbourg, however, despite its acknowledged importance on a flash point of Anglo-French rivalry, was overlooked. The area attracted no one with either the money or, with one exception, the inclination to push for some type of commemoration. The solitary exception was J.S. McLennan, a Montreal-born industrialist involved in the late nineteenth-century development of Cape Breton coal mines. In the entry on Cape Breton published in *Picturesque Canada* (1882), written by McLennan and the Reverend Rob-



Captain D. J. Kennelly (1831-1907), the first person who sought to preserve historic Louisbourg.

ert Murray, the industrialist (and later historian) asked: 'Should not some memorial be raised which would show that Canadians . . . are still mindful of the great deeds done on Canadian soil? There could be no fitter site than . . . Louisbourg, where French and English dust commingles in peace.' More of an observation than a request, the call for a 'memorial' remained unanswered for over a decade.

When Louisbourg finally received a 'permanent' monument, it was because of the initiative taken by an American organization, The Society of Colonial Wars. The overall aim of the society, founded in 1892, was to perpetuate the memory of events from pre-revolutionary American history; it chose Louisbourg for one of its first memorials because of the New Englanders' successful siege there in 1745. The monument was a 26-foot column, inscribed with 'To Our Heroic Dead', and the date of the unveiling was the 150th anniversary of the French surrender.

In the months leading up to the unveiling, word of the proposed commemoration reached unsympathetic ears in Canada. Four Maritime papers (three French-language and one English Catholic) protested the very idea of a group from a foreign country raising a monument on Canadian soil to what had been a defeat for French Canadians. They described the project as an 'aggressive demonstration' by Americans that would be felt as an 'insult' by all French Canadians. The United



*Arches of the casemates of the King's Bastion, as painted by an unknown artist in the late nineteenth century.*

Empire Loyalists Association of Canada, meeting in Montreal, objected to the American scheme for basically the same reason. New Brunswick Senator Pascal Poirier raised the issue in the Red Chamber, asking the federal government to prevent the ceremony. Prime Minister Sir Mackenzie Bowell, however, was unmoved by the various protests. In his opinion it was not an issue for the government of Canada; it was simply a private society erecting its own monument on private land.

Despite the prime minister's declaration, when the Colonial Wars monument was unveiled it was with considerable government participation. Not only were there two warships in the harbour for the occasion, but the memorial itself was unveiled by Lieutenant-Governor Daly of Nova Scotia on behalf of the Governor-General, the Earl of Aberdeen. Aberdeen sent his regrets that he could not be there in person, and so did United States President Grover Cleveland. Twenty-five hundred people attended the festivities, listening to two hours of speeches by various Canadian and American dignitaries. The protests that had surfaced earlier that spring were not without effect — most speakers made deliberate reference to the achievements and valour of France and French Canadians. Nonetheless, the main theme of the day was the unity and greatness of the Anglo-Saxon race. The Anglophile sentiment was put most clearly by the

speaker who declared that it was not 'the humiliation of France we celebrate . . . [but] it was a happy day for Canada . . . that the fleur-de-lys fell from the fortresses of Louisbourg and Quebec'.

With Louisbourg commemorated — at least the siege of 1745 — the next step was to preserve the surviving ruins. The first to advocate such preservation was Captain D.J. Kennelly, one of the industrialists who was reshaping the face of Cape Breton at the turn of the twentieth century. Kennelly was an Irishman who had been trained as a lawyer in England and then moved to India where he served in the Royal Indian Navy. He came to Cape Breton from England during the 1870s as a representative of a group of London capitalists who held the fanciful idea that Louisbourg, not New York, might become the North American terminus of trans-Atlantic passenger travel. When that project died Kennelly decided to stay in the area, becoming involved in local coal, iron and railway development.

Industrialist though he was, Captain Kennelly was fascinated with ruins and relics, and it was this side of his personality that brought him to Louisbourg. Late in the nineteenth century Kennelly acquired the land upon which stood the most prominent ruins of the original eighteenth-century town, the arches of the casemates of the King's Bastion. Believing that it was a 'sacred duty' of the twentieth century to preserve





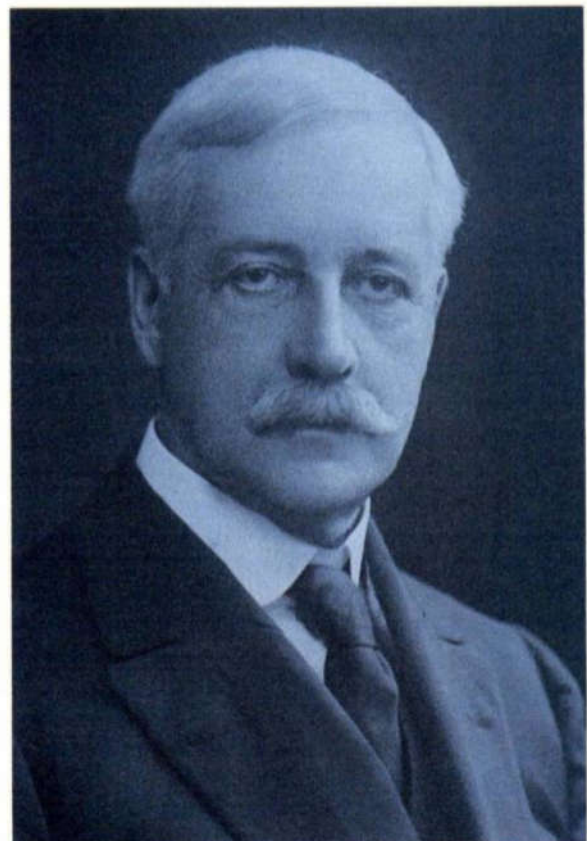
*Reconstructed Louisbourg comes alive each summer with about a hundred people in costume — from bakers to boys with fishing rods, soldiers to fishermen.*



*The re-creation of Louisbourg was an enormous undertaking, demanding two decades of in-depth research and painstaking reconstruction.*

the 'remnants' of the past, he began an international campaign entitled the Louisbourg Memorial Fund. He called for the stabilization of its ruins, the fencing and improvement of nearby burial grounds, and the erection of a large masonry tower which would house a museum as well as marble panels listing the names of those who had fought in its sieges. In front of the tower he planned to erect a bronze equestrian statue of Edward VII. Beneath the tower Kennelly envisioned 'underground Mortuary Chambers to contain the relics of the dead found on the site . . . and for the remains of Canadian heroes of the future.'

Kennelly convinced a remarkable number of prominent people to support his scheme. The patron was Edward VII (which would seem to explain the statue); vice-patrons, of which there were more than 40, included Sir Charles Tupper, Robert Borden, the governors of five states of the United States, six Canadian lieutenant-governors, 14 British peers, the president of Harvard University, and numerous other prominent figures in the three countries. President Theodore Roosevelt did not join the organization, but did send his 'cordial good wishes' for success. Kennelly, for all his work, contented himself with the title of honorary secretary. In April 1906 he took his campaign to the Nova Scotia legislature, where he secured the passage of 'An Act to incorporate the Trustees of the French Fortress and Old Burying-Ground at Louisbourg as an His-



*Senator J.S. McLennan (1853-1939), a pioneer in Louisbourg research and historic site development.*

torical Monument of the Dominion of Canada and as a Public Work'. That a provincial government had the constitutional right to declare any site to be of *national* historic significance was doubtful. Nevertheless, it was done and Kennelly boasted that it was the first time in Canadian history that a historical monument had been 'legalized'.

Captain Kennelly's preservation efforts began in 1903 when he had layers of earth and stone removed from the ruins of the casemates and replaced by cement. The project continued over the next three summers, with Kennelly personally supervising all aspects of the work. His efforts were later judged to have been 'somewhat amateurish', as he did not provide sufficient drainage or waterproofing. At the time the sheer fact that *something* was being done was an encouraging sign.

D.J. Kennelly died in August 1907, aged 76, and the first attempt to preserve what was left of eighteenth-century Louisbourg died with him. The fund raising stopped and the work on the ruins came to an end. Although the former naval captain bequeathed his fortress properties and \$88,000 worth of bonds in the Cape Breton Coal, Iron and Railway Company to others to carry on the work, the bequest was impressive only on paper. The bonds were without market value and the land gift served only to delay and complicate subsequent development. The properties containing the ruins would remain tied up in Kennelly's estate until 1924. Despite D.J. Kennelly's obvious achievements, a decade after his death historic Louisbourg was still a jumble of ruins and shanties without further commemorative monuments.

If D.J. Kennelly with all his apparent energy and contacts was unable to preserve or commemorate the site of eighteenth-century Louisbourg, then who could succeed? In contemporary United States wealthy philanthropists, coalitions of concerned citizens, or local historical societies often came to the fore in such cases. In Canada, however, there was not the same enthusiasm (or, more important, the willingness to donate money) for historical matters. In the related areas of museums and art galleries the situation was much the same; during the early 1930s Americans spent almost three times as much per capita as Canadians did on those institutions. The explanation lies not only in a smaller and more scattered population, but also perhaps in the relative lack of a distinct national identity or sentiment in Canada at that time.

It was not long after the death of D.J. Kennelly that new appeals began to be made for the federal government to take action at Louisbourg. The most important of the advocates for government action was J.S. McLennan, publisher of the *Sydney Post* and soon to be a member of the Senate. In 1908 he declared that 'the preservation of historic sites is too large a task for

## *The future of Louisbourg . . . a summer series of Molière, afternoon and evening performances of baroque music, exhibitions of eighteenth-century paintings, engravings, maps and plans?*

private or co-operate undertaking. Indeed, part of its significance would be lost were it not for the action of the people through their governments.' McLennan was doing in-depth research on the French occupation of Louisbourg and knew first hand the rich documentary and cartographic record the town had left behind. He pointed out that it would be possible 'to reconstruct the city as it was . . . [it] is only a question of intelligence and outlay.' While a complete reconstruction was possible, McLennan urged, at the time, the reconstruction of only a single building, which would serve as a museum.

It was one thing to recommend that a historic site be acquired by the federal government; it was quite another to find a department to administer it. Since 1885, when the government acquired the Banff Hot Springs, the Department of the Interior had managed selected natural areas as National Parks. Historic sites, however, were not initially part of Interior's mandate. A partial solution to the problem was found in 1919, when the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, an advisory group of historical specialists from across the country, was created. One of the first sites considered by the board was Louisbourg, yet it was uncertain what to recommend because of the complicated land ownership there. That situation was straightened out during the 1920s, with a series of property acquisitions. In 1926 historic Louisbourg received its first Historic Sites and Monuments Board plaques; two years later it became an *official* National Historic Site.

Once the Parks Branch owned Louisbourg it had to decide what to do with it. No one thought they could leave it as it was. One school of thought, put forth by British planner Thomas Adams, who was working in Canada on the Commission of Conservation, was to eliminate all houses on the site, do a little landscaping, and maximize the aesthetic and emotional experience of visiting a historic spot. Adams wrote that the 1895 monument was 'harmless', but that it was 'the ruins, the earthworks and the barren burying ground that make the real memorials'. A second point of view was expressed by J.S. McLennan and his fellow enthusi-

asts. They argued the emphasis at Louisbourg should be educational rather than emotional. They envisioned the actual reconstruction of various features to give the 'ordinary visitor a vivid picture of the place where events of so great historical significance' had taken place. Secondary objectives included the collection and display of documents and artifacts in a fireproof museum and the provision of research material to interested archaeologists and historians. Both approaches, it is worth noting, considered as essential the removal of the dozen or so 'modern' houses, out-buildings and fences on the site. The fact that this small community of families had lived in the area for a century and a half, and that many of their houses had survived longer than the 45-year life span of French Louisbourg, was of no apparent interest to anyone. Nor did anyone perceive that in part it was the presence of these simple dwellings in the midst of the ruins of a bygone era, that made the Louisbourg site such a popular spot for philosophizing about the passage of time.

The approach eventually adopted by the Parks Branch incorporated most of the ideas put forth by the Louisbourg enthusiasts, with the exception of the full-scale reconstruction of selected features. The program began in 1929 and continued throughout the 1930s, with additional projects undertaken in 1949, 1950 and 1955. The program consisted of preservation work on the historic casemates, the excavation of various building locations, and the uncovering of some of the streets of the original town. The culmination of the development was the construction of a museum in 1935-36, in which excavated artifacts and related historical materials could be displayed to the visiting public.

For the next quarter century Louisbourg remained largely unchanged, a site of scattered ruins and several monuments on an open landscape. Then, in 1960, the idea of rebuilding Louisbourg surfaced once more. This time the circumstances could not have been better: a generally buoyant Canadian economy, a government headed by John G. Diefenbaker looking for inspirational national projects, and a depressed local economy in Cape Breton that was generating large scale unemployment and widespread social malaise. The greatest of Cape Breton's problems lay in the coal industry: a society-wide switch to low-cost petroleum was forcing one mine after another to close, tossing hundreds of men out of work. Alternate employment had to be found and Justice I.C. Rand, in his *Report of the Royal Commission of Coal* (1960), disregarded the usual make-work schemes. He came up instead with an imaginative partial solution: the 'symbolic reconstruction of the fortress of Louisbourg'. Rand contended that a reconstruction would not only employ a couple of hundred miners, but it would also create a major

tourist attraction and be an intellectual and cultural stimulus for all of Cape Breton Island. The following year, two centuries after William Pitt's decision that Louisbourg be 'effectively, and most entirely, demolished', the Diefenbaker government gave its blessing to a multi-million dollar program to partially rebuild the place. The wheel of fortune had certainly turned.

It had taken British soldiers five months to mine and then blow up Louisbourg's fortifications. How long would it take their twentieth-century counterparts to re-erect a portion of what they had undone? No one had the answer to that question in 1961, but it turned out to be about two decades. When it began, such a project was without precedent in Canada. Never before had so much money (it grew to \$25 million in capital funding) been committed for a heritage effort, though the word 'heritage' was not yet in vogue in 1961. Most people, from politicians to the general public, saw it as an opportunity to create a kind of Williamsburg North — a major tourist attraction that would celebrate Canada's eighteenth-century past in much the same way as Colonial Williamsburg did for the United States. Others recognized it as an important research window on the past. Still others believed it was first and foremost an employment measure for disadvantaged Cape Bretoners. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s the project captured the imagination of the Canadian public, and journalists never tired of telling their readers that a visit to Louisbourg was like travelling through time or stepping back into the past.

But now in the 1980s something has changed. No longer under construction, the place has ceased to be newsworthy. Visitor totals are down from the 1970s and one wonders if Louisbourg might get left behind in the current rush to embrace the future (a desire that manifests itself in the popularity of high-tech items — from computers to videos).

It is too early to tell what impact shifts in society and in visitors' interests might eventually have on the fortress of Louisbourg. Yet, that there will be changes is beyond question. Perhaps there will be an increased use of the place as a setting for cultural events — say, a summer series of Molière and other early modern playwrights, afternoon and evening performances of baroque music, and exhibitions of eighteenth-century paintings, engravings, maps and plans. Then again, the fortress might build on its base of reconstruction trades and develop into a training centre for people interested in traditional crafts and ways of doing things. Conceivably, the years and decades ahead might witness an integration of the eighteenth-century townsite into the modern community of Louisbourg, across the harbour. Whatever happens, one can be assured that Louisbourg will continue to evolve, and that as time goes by there will be more surprising twists in its story. ♦

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# The Montagnais

By Alan Cooke

*Paintings and drawings by André Michel*



THE FUR TRADE BETWEEN Europeans and the Montagnais on the North Shore of the St Lawrence River predates the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company by at least 150 years. The Company itself was already more than 150 years old before it began to take an active interest in the fur trade of the region.

Jacques Cartier was the first European, of whom record tells, to visit the North Shore in 1534 and again in 1535; his own account indicates that the natives he met there were well used to trading furs with European whalers and fisherman, who, by 1500, had begun to frequent the Gulf of St Lawrence.

In 1600, the French established the first trading post in Canada at Tadoussac, a seasonally occupied post at the mouth of Saguenay River. In 1608, Champlain

established the first permanent trading post and settlement in Canada at Quebec. From these small beginnings, New France steadily grew. In 1658, the King of France granted a lease, La Traite [Trade] de Tadoussac, also known as the Domaine du Roi or the King's Posts, which gave exclusive hunting, fishing, and trading rights on the North Shore from Isle-aux-Coudres downriver to near Sept-Îles and northward to the headwaters of the rivers draining that stretch of coast. In 1661, the Compagnie des Cent-Associés granted another monopoly, the Seigneurie de Mingan, which ran eastward from the King's Posts to Goynish River.

Meantime, with Montagnais guides, French explorers and fur traders were trying to find an overland route from the St Lawrence River to Hudson Bay. Radisson and des Groseilliers claimed to have crossed from Lake Superior to Hudson Bay in 1660. They probably invented this story to persuade merchants in Boston to finance a trading voyage to Hudson Bay in 1663, a venture the authorities in Quebec had steadfastly refused to support. When this voyage failed, the pair turned to London for assistance. In 1668, the *Non-*

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*Alan Cooke, with a Ph.D. from Cambridge for his dissertation 'The Ungava Venture of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1830-1843' has studied the history and native people of Quebec for some 25 years.*

*He has now incorporated under federal charter a non-profit organization, the Hochelaga Research Institute, to create a polar research library in Montreal.*



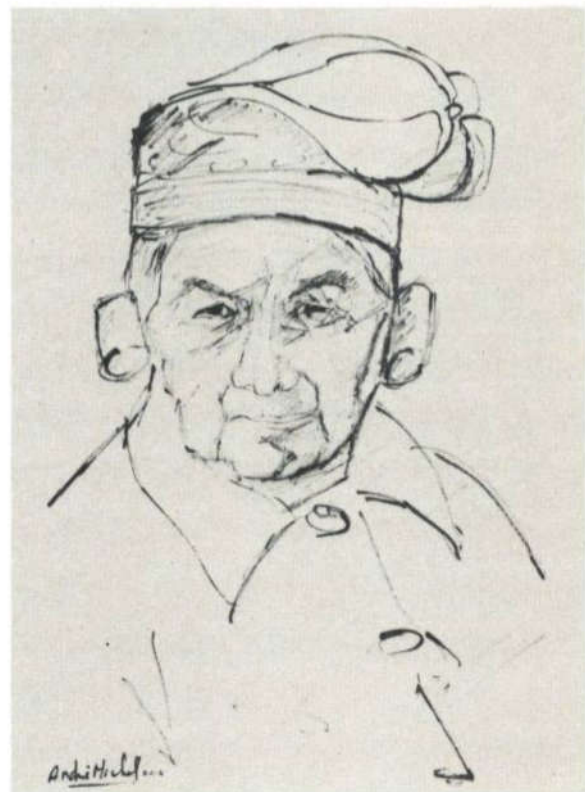
André Michel, now living in Sept-Îles, north of Quebec, was born in Avignon, France, in July 1945.

He has been painting and sketching the Montagnais for more than ten years. In 1976 he founded the Sept-Îles Museum to promote the Montagnais culture; and formed a Montagnais dance troupe, 'Le Carcajou', which performs in Canada and Europe.



such, Captain Zachariah Gillam, with des Groseilliers on board, reached the mouth of Rupert River. There they wintered, returning in 1669 with a trade in furs so rich that the supporters of the expedition incorporated under royal charter on 2nd May 1670 with a name familiar to generations of Canadian scholars: 'The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay'.

The advent, during the seventeenth century, of Frenchmen to the St Lawrence River and of Englishmen to Hudson Bay had the effect of polarizing what all the evidence suggests had been, until then, a fairly homogeneous population of Algonkian linguistic stock, a people spread over the whole of the Quebec-Labrador peninsula — except the northern coasts, occupied then as now by the Inuit. Within historic time, this polarization has created indistinguishably different groups of Indians within a formerly undifferentiated population. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, English-speaking Protestant traders at Hudson's Bay Company posts influenced the Crees who lived along the rivers draining into Hudson Bay and James Bay, while their cousins, the Montagnais of the North Shore, were being ever more firmly drawn into a French-speaking, Roman Catholic sphere of influence. In the central interior of the peninsula, a third group of Indians, the Naskapis, continued their traditional life independent of the fur traders. During the mid-nine-





*La famille face à l'hiver, Mingan, 1980.*



*La berceuse, Sept-Iles, 1976.*



*In the bush André Michel drank tea with us, he ate our meat — caribou, dried or pounded and mixed with bear grease — and shared our bannock. He slept as we did on spruce boughs and rose with us at dawn. He followed us on the trail, day after day, without saying a word. In short, he made us forget that he was white. And that is how André Michel reached our people, the Montagnais.*

Nite minashkuat, André Michel minipan nipishapunu ashit ninan, mitshipan kie pashteu uiashinu kie neuiekanat ashit muashk piminu kie kutshipuepan innu pakueshikan; kie tshi niuepan miam ninan nite tshishtapakunat kie tshetshi unit miam pietapannit; kie tshi pimuteapan mitshet tatutshishukua miam ka ishi pimuteutshit nass eka tshekuannu issishuet. Nenu ui tutamupan, kutshipanitapan tshetshi unitshissitakannit kauapashinit e tanit. Eukunu André Michel ka ut tshi pitakuat innu, tshetshi nishtuapamat kie tshetshi tutak tshetshi nishtuapamakannit innu ute kassinu e ishpitashkamikanit ashit nenu e unashinataitshet.

Daniel Vachon, Chief of Sept-Îles and Maliotenam for ten years.



*Camp à Moisie, 1981.*



teenth century, they too were finally contained by Hudson's Bay Company policy.

The long struggle between the French and the English for control of Hudson Bay need not detain us here. What the French had won more than once on the ground, they gave away at the negotiating tables of European treaties. Finally, by the Treaty of Paris, 1763, the French ceded New France to Great Britain. The British continued to lease the King's Posts and other seigneuries along the North Shore as trading monopolies to the highest bidder and, in 1802, the Montreal-based North West Company took a 20-year lease on the King's Posts. This lease, with other rights and claims of the North West Company, devolved to the Hudson's Bay Company with the coalition of the two companies in 1821.

When the lease to the King's Posts expired in 1822, the Hudson's Bay Company hesitated to renew it, partly because the long conflict between the two companies now required stringent economy and partly because it considered the rent too high. The Company was prepared to pay about £500 a year for the lease, but John Goudie, a merchant from Quebec, agreed to pay an annual rent of £1,200 for it. Goudie sold two-thirds of his rights to the King's Posts in 1823, an interest that William Lampson of Quebec acquired in 1824. In 1828, Lampson acquired the remaining third of Goudie's lease.

Although the Hudson's Bay Company had been unwilling to pay a high price for the King's Posts, it did lease the seigneuries on either side of it: Milles Vaches on the west, where it established a post at Portneuf, and Mingan on the east. From these smaller and cheaper seigneuries, the Company imagined it could, without trespass, persuade the Montagnais who traded at the King's Posts to bring their trade to Portneuf. But this trick worked both ways: before long, competition from the King's Posts began to be felt at Company posts on James Bay. Meantime, the post at Portneuf was too successful: Lampson complained of injury to his trade and, in 1831, Portneuf was judged to be within the King's Posts.

After the coalition of 1821, George Simpson emerged as the dominating figure in the fur trade and soon became its overseas governor. Ever since 1814, when two Moravian missionaries, Kohlmeister and Kmoch, had published a favourable comparison of Ungava Bay with the Labrador coast, the Hudson's Bay Company had contemplated establishing a post there. After many delays, Nicol Finlayson established Fort Chimo on Koksoak River in 1830. In the same year, tired of competition, high prices, and litigation from the King's Posts, the Hudson's Bay Company bought the remainder of Lampson's lease of this monopoly for £25,000. The Company had learned an expensive lesson: it had to possess this frontier of Rupert's Land, although it found possession of it, in E.E. Rich's phrase, 'a vexation rather than an asset'. In 1835, the Company purchased the lease to Mingan and, in 1836, Simpson established a post at North West River on the Labrador coast in competition with Quebec merchants there, whom he soon bought out.

Now, except for the northern coast of Labrador, on which Moravian missionaries and traders had been established among the Inuit since 1771, the Hudson's Bay Company controlled the whole Quebec-Labrador peninsula. Simpson had two main reasons for wanting to control all of the trading posts frequented by Montagnais, Cree and Naskapi Indians: to prevent ruinous competition from outsiders and to prevent individual Indians moving from one post to another, leaving their debts behind them. He also wanted to establish posts in the interior of the peninsula from which came, on average, the finest and most valuable skins. (For its latitude, the Quebec-Labrador peninsula is the coldest place in the world. The early onset of a long, cold, snowy winter gave special qualities to the pelts of fur-bearing animals there.) In 1838, after repeated failures, a trader from Fort Chimo established Fort Nascopie near present-day Schefferville. After 1841, the Company supplied Fort Nascopie from North West River, and it closed Fort Chimo in 1843. By about 1840, the Hudson's Bay Company had more or less firmly attached all of the Indians of the Quebec-



Labrador peninsula to specific trading posts. If a hunter moved from one post to another, he moved with permission and he took his debt with him.

Simpson's determination to stabilize fur-trading activities in the Quebec-Labrador peninsula endured until World War II, during which time change came only slowly to this vast region. In 1867, the Company reopened Fort Chimo and, about 1870, it closed Fort Nascopie. Thereafter the Naskapis traded at Fort Chimo. About 1900, the traders noticed a decline in the great herds of caribou, the common resource of all the natives of the peninsula. (This decline continued into the 1960s, when the numbers of caribou began once more to increase.) In 1903, Revillon Frères began to compete with Hudson's Bay Company posts on Ungava Bay and Hudson Bay, a competition the older company finally contained during the 1920s and absorbed in 1936. Because of this competition, the Hudson's Bay Company opened Fort McKenzie in 1916 (closed in 1948), about half-way between Fort Chimo and present-day Schefferville. In 1937, Matthieu André, a Montagnais, showed a geologist some iron-ore deposits on his trapping grounds just south of the central height of land in Labrador. The geologist later found higher-grade ore deposits north of the height of land in Quebec.

World War II abruptly ended the pattern of life Simpson had imposed on the Indians of the Quebec-

Labrador peninsula a century before. The construction by the United States of two large air bases, one at Goose Bay, the other at Fort Chimo, brought the region into the twentieth century in a hurry. Between 1950 and 1954, the Iron Ore Company of Canada built a mining town first called Burnt Creek, later Knob Lake, finally renamed Schefferville, to exploit the iron-ore deposits in the central interior. At the same time, it built the Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railway to carry ore to tidewater on the North Shore and built ore trans-shipment and harbour facilities at Sept-Îles.

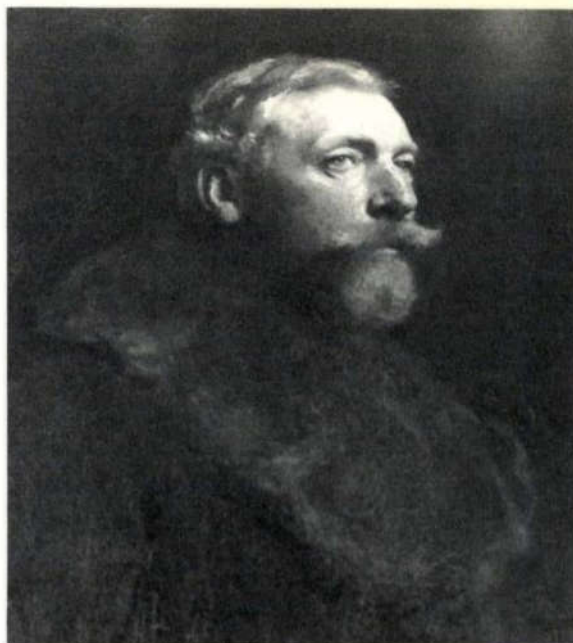
Many Montagnais families from Maliotenam Reserve near Sept-Îles followed the head of rail northward to Knob Lake. In 1956, encouraged by reports of employment near old Fort Nascopie, the Naskapi Indians left Fort Chimo to relocate near the new mining town. Montagnais and Naskapi families have lived side by side, first at John Lake Reserve, since 1972 at Matimekossh Reserve, on the edge of Schefferville. The two groups, once indistinguishable, now separated from each other for more than a century, have had during their separation very different linguistic, cultural, and religious experiences. Their coexistence in Schefferville has not been easy.

Historical differences between the Montagnais and the Crees and Naskapis have been aggravated by their different responses to the James Bay Project, a gigantic hydroelectric development the Province of Quebec announced in 1971 without prior consultation with the native peoples whose lands it will flood. The Crees and the Inuit of northern Quebec took the James Bay Development Corporation to court and in 1973 won an injunction to stop the project. A higher court soon overturned the injunction, but the Province of Quebec, in co-operation with the federal government, decided to negotiate a settlement of native rights and land claims, whatever they might be, in northern Quebec. In 1975, the Crees and Inuit signed the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement; in 1978, the Naskapis of Schefferville signed an associated treaty, the Northeast Quebec Agreement.

Although the Montagnais of the North Shore had historically valid claims to the territory covered by the new treaties, they chose not to participate in the negotiations leading up to them. With federal assistance, the Montagnais have been preparing for some time to negotiate a settlement and recognition of their land claims and other rights, and they have the lessons, both good and bad, of the James Bay agreements before them.

The attention given during the past 15 years to historical and contemporary activities of the native peoples of the Quebec-Labrador peninsula has had many positive aspects. André Michel's valuable record of life along the North Shore is one of the most attractive of them. ♦

*For most of a year, John Talbot Clifton travelled in the Central Arctic, determined to track down a musk-ox and carry the head back to Lytham Hall. The story of this venture is based on Clifton's diary and is retold by John Kennedy, who has been land agent for the Clifton estate for fifty years.*



*John Talbot Clifton, Squire and Lord of the Manor of Lytham, Clifton, Westby and Morton. From an oil painting by Copnall, c.1909.*

## *The Squire Takes a Musk-ox*

By John Kennedy

ON 17 MARCH 1897, a strange little party of adventurers arrived in Winnipeg, checked into a comfortable hotel and began making inquiries about travelling north to the Barren Grounds beyond Chesterfield Inlet. The purpose of the expedition was to obtain the head of a musk-ox as a hunting trophy.

The leader of the party was already, at the age of 29, a veteran traveller and sportsman. John Talbot Clifton, Squire and Lord of the Manor of Lytham, Clifton, Westby and Marton in the County of Lancashire, had hunted deer and bear in the Sierras of Mexico and in 1895 had made the difficult journey from Alaska into the Yukon via the Chilkoot Pass. His travelling companions when he arrived in Winnipeg were his valet, Betts, and his brother Arthur Clifton.

After consultations with Commissioner C. C. Chipman of the Hudson's Bay Company, Clifton decided to travel to the Barrens by the way of Norway House, York Factory and Fort Churchill. The days before

departure were filled with feverish activity. In his journal Clifton describes the preparation of his northern kit, including 'everything from bacon and beans to drawers and socks. Am taking in the way of liquor three bottles of whisky, one of brandy, the latter purely medicinal, which is a very light supply.'

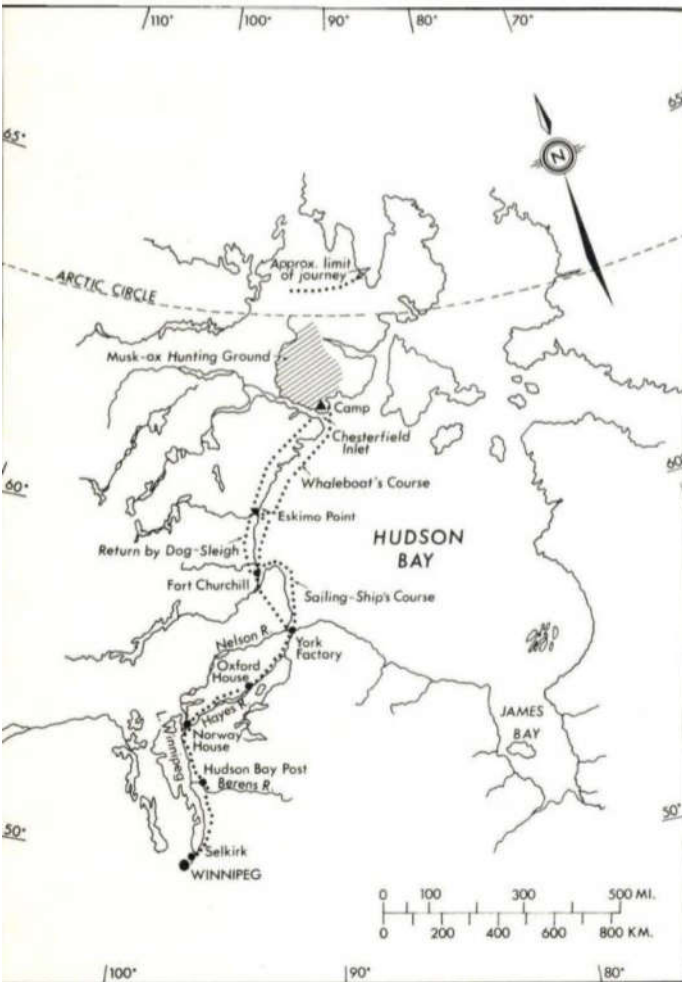
The entry for 19 March reads: 'Work not the name for it. H B Company working to get everything ready to start at night; tailor, bootmaker, gun maker, cartridges out of customs, watchmaker, leave cards at club, pay bills, try on clothes, saying goodbye, etc.'

That night they travelled to Selkirk near the foot of Lake Winnipeg, where they commenced their journey, moving on by horse and sleigh to the Hudson's Bay Company post at Berens River, which they reached on the evening of 24 March.

There, Clifton ordered a dog-team and rested. He had a touch of snow-blindness, but that night had a jolly evening and finished the first bottle of whisky.



*The squire's ancestral home, Lytham Hall in Lancashire.*



*A map of the journey, from the original drawn by John Talbot Clifton.*

An Indian, Alec, joined them as guide; he spoke good English, and started to teach Clifton the Cree language.

On 28 March the dogs arrived, having been driven all night to catch up with the party. These were four 'splendid' animals and Clifton was well pleased with his team which cost him \$115. The next day he began to learn how to drive them.

Their next objective was Norway House, 160 miles away, and the going was heavy. During the day the snow was thawing and they travelled at night or made very early starts before sun-up. The diary entry for 1 April gives a vivid picture, typical of the journey:

Up at 3:30 A.M. breakfast, then 5:45 A.M. started, at 9:30 A.M. stopped to have tea. Worse than wet, Betts, self, blankets, all wet; I fancy all the contents of the boxes are wet. Passed some ptarmigan, snow bunting and 2 ravens. Started again 11:15 A.M. and stopped at 4:45 P.M.; a very rapid river flows into the lake and one Indian had to go ahead to test the ice with a pole. He was just in time, as 150 yards in the direction we were going the pole went right under. William [a guide] is in bad temper, quarrelled because I asked him a distance. Started again at 7:30 P.M. after supper of white fish and jam and tea; a slight frost, 3 degrees made going rather better, the night grew darker, clouds came up; with tired dogs not much fun. My dogs whenever they came to a rock or tree, one would bolt for it, they very nearly put me in a hole of deep water — within a foot — really dangerous. Arthur, right ahead, is being driven to catch up an Indian who was sent ahead to make the road. We thought he might be drowned in the hole.

William and Arthur have forgotten Betts and self. I got out and ran with my dogs to catch up leaders 1 mile ahead and made them wait for Betts who was clean out of sight. . . . At 8 A.M. reached Norway House, dogs' feet leaving a trail of blood; 26 hours' hard travelling doing the distance of 45 miles.

Few gentlemen's gentlemen can have endured what Betts was going through in the service of his master, but this was only the beginning.

For two days they rested at Norway House, buying more stores for the next leg of the journey to Oxford House, a distance of 180 miles. Then on 7 April they started again through muskeg country. There were frequent portages on the route when the sleighs and equipment had to be carried, men and dogs each having their burden. Some of the trails were dangerous and Clifton sprained his foot.

It was during this part of the journey that tension began to grow between the brothers. Clifton snappishly

notes: 'Can't travel with Arthur, too boyish', and then 'Arthur treats the camp as a drawing room, refuses to let any dog near the fire, he has got a favourite poodle that he feeds carefully.' Such reflections must have been rudely interrupted when the fire, blazing up, set his bedclothes on fire.

On 11 April, they arrived at Oxford House having covered 180 miles in four and a half days.

Clifton's foot was so bad now that he could not walk and had to rest it. Spring was coming and no Indian would go through the muskeg country lying ahead, as they would be up to their waists in water. Clifton, on the advice of the Company's agent, J.K. MacDonald, decided to wait till the river opened in about two weeks' time and meanwhile to hunt with the Indians to keep the post supplied with fresh meat.

It was, however, six weeks before they were able to leave Oxford House, even though it was an early spring. To pass the days Clifton read *Pilgrims' Progress* from the post's library, and learned to speak Cree. On 15 April there was a laconic entry: 'Betts got lost in the forest.'

The friction between the brothers grew. Clifton records: 'Arthur snores worse than ever.' Later he writes 'Have thought of plan for A.' The plan was to leave Arthur at York Factory and he left a letter to this effect on his dressing table. 'Wrote A. my ideas, better than speech.'

Arthur however, had no scruples about voicing his opinion. 'A. spoke to me at last. I find he has a very low mind. I determined not to go further than York Factory with him, all the things I was going to do for him he upset with his foul words.'

Wild geese and duck were now coming in abundance but were very difficult to get near, so Clifton had a hide made down river at some distance from the post. Here he would repair at 5:00 A.M., setting his decoys and waiting for the birds. Betts brought him his breakfast and lunch.

For most of May, Clifton lived by himself, having pitched his tent some distance from the post. Here he was looked after by an Indian named Jim, who turned out to be a 'highly capable French cook, drinks only tea, no water, as he is a teetotaler'. Betts would arrive by canoe with provisions and Clifton visited the post for his 'weekly tub', and to join in the poker games. At last the Hayes River was considered to be sufficiently open to commence the journey to York Factory. All necessary provisions and equipment had been assembled and a suitable boat obtained. Arthur preferred to travel in his own birch-bark canoe.

On 31 May they started.

After an indefinite amount of bother the Indians at last got everything they wanted, having taken half an hour saying goodbye to their relations, then hav-

ing shaken hands with over thirty Indians congregated to see us off, we got away with about 1,000 lbs. dead weight in the boat. Arthur with about 300 lbs., 2 Indians and himself. My oar is terribly heavy, like a barge pole but more clumsy. One man rows stroke, 2 sit on one seat each with a scull and I sit in the bow for shooting duck, etc. We had plenty of small rapids. I do not think the Indians like them; they make an awful fuss at each one. A., of course, went out of the route, so his birch bark got scraped. We have just camped in front of a small rapid.

For the next eight days they were swept along with the current. Feeling ill and in terrible temper, Clifton one day stripped and dived into the icy lake they were traversing 'trying a hydropathic cure which I think succeeded.' He had lost his sketch book and blamed poor Betts for 'losing everything these days'.

On 8 June they got a fair wind and making sail, arrived at their destination at 4:30 P.M. Arthur arrived

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*Travelling north, Clifton beguiled the  
Eskimos by playing the flute and  
doing simple conjuring tricks.*

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in his canoe at 8:00 P.M. to Clifton's delight, as he was determined to beat Arthur and had rowed himself the whole of the previous day.

Clifton was pleased with York Factory and opened the bottle of medicinal brandy in celebration. There was an excellent library and the clocks kept time, unlike those at Oxford House.

There was a great quantity of ice in the Bay and he decided to go hunting for bear with two Indians. They were away for six days and the hunt was not a success.

Ice still blocked the way to Churchill, so they had to wait for the south wind to clear the Bay. Arthur departed to the Nelson River in his canoe to try his luck at hunting and Clifton passed the time reading, playing his flute and sketching. He also taught Dr Alex Milne, the Company's agent, to play piquet; the Doctor won, as Talbot's luck was 'infernal'. 'I shall take very good care not to be on the same terms of intimacy with him as I was before; he is a man I heartily despise, I wrote rather a good skit on him today.' A few days previously the doctor had been very sharp with Clifton who had unwisely made suggestions as to how the collection of mails from Norway House should be speeded up. 'His rudeness came out in full force to my utter surprise, and he told me insolently I had not been long enough in this country to know how things were managed.'

Arthur arrived back in triumph from the Nelson River, having shot one black bear, one beaver, two geese and seven ducks. Betts, too, suffered Clifton's displeasure. He was getting lazy and not conducting himself like a servant, and the next day Clifton gave him the sack.

On 1 July the Company's boats, *Black Prince* and *La Perouse* were launched to take the travellers on to Churchill. Clifton was an interested spectator until, seeing an Indian boy stoning a dog, he gave the boy a good shaking, whereupon the boy's father vowed vengeance on him.



On 5 July the vessels, manned by Indians, sailed for Churchill some 150 miles up the coast, Arthur in *La Perouse* and Clifton in the *Black Prince*. The journey took six days. Conditions on board the *Black Prince* were primitive. Clifton had a small, bug-infested deck cabin, but he did not starve and records his diet as bear chops, deer steaks, pork, canned beef, duck, snipe, geese, apples and rice, plum pudding, toast, bread, butter, scones, chocolate, tea and coffee. He was a martyr to indigestion and sometimes paid heavily for unwise combinations of the available victuals.

It was Sunday, 11 July, when Clifton went ashore at Churchill and met Captain John Hawes, the Company's Agent, and Mrs Hawes, who put him in a clean room with a carpet, the first he had seen in those parts.

During the next eight days Talbot bought the trade goods he would require for barter with the Eskimos. On the advice of Captain Hawes and the interpreter who was to go with him, he purchased 3 double-barrelled guns, 100 pounds of powder, 3 single-barrelled guns, 28 pounds of shot and ball, 8,000 gun caps, 18

carats of tobacco of 2½ pounds each, 40 pounds of plug tobacco, 3 dozen scraping knives, ½ dozen Swedish, ½ dozen fish, 1 dozen roach and 1 dozen butcher knives; 1 dozen dags (snow knives), 1,450 needles, 1¼ pounds seed beads, 5 oval boilers, one dozen cotton handkerchiefs and one dozen files. Protective clothing against the savage winter months to come was also necessary and included deerskin mitts lined with white fox, moccasins made of the same, mukluks and parkas. He had been given a rabbit-skin blanket, which proved to be one of his greatest comforts. Provisions for the Barren Grounds included two 66-pound kegs of pickled pork and 300 pounds of flour.

On the eve of departure Clifton, feeling ill and feverish, was in a serious mood. 'It is a curious feeling being on the brink of civilisation and plunging into the unknown for heaven knows how long, no flour and wood to be got and in a land of complete savages; many might think it strange, but to me there is an awe, combined with a mysticism which is bound to weigh heavily on the mind however much the great change is in accordance with one's wishes.'

Next morning, 20 July, he said good-bye to Betts and Arthur, who were returning to England, and again boarded the *Black Prince* in company with thirty Eskimo, their wives, children, bedding and utensils. The smell was at first overpowering, but he got used to it and once more took refuge in his cabin — a 'kennel', six feet long and four feet high. With him was George Oman, a mixed-blood from Churchill whom he had engaged as his interpreter and from whom Clifton learned something of the Eskimo language. On the way to Eskimo Point, about two hundred miles north of Churchill, Clifton first saw the Eskimos — men, women and children — gorging themselves on raw salmon and venison. The sight revolted him at first but the time was to come when he himself would not despise eating raw fish and flesh. He beguiled the Eskimos by playing the flute and doing simple conjuring tricks.

At Eskimo Point two days later they disembarked the wives of the crew and the other Eskimos, and Clifton, going ashore, managed to persuade a musk-ox hunter and his son to accompany him. They sailed on in worsening weather, and next night anchored off an encampment where a dance was held. Clifton lit a pipe of tobacco which went the rounds of the whole company.

The next day, 25 July, he remained in his cabin reading, wrapped in his rabbit skin, as it was bitterly cold, while the vessel rolled and pitched. 'My mind in all this dreary waiting is, I am sorry to say, vacillating whether to go on or turn back, hundreds of miles from wood in one of the coldest parts of the globe, uncertain about food and the interpreter humming into my ears "no wood, no wood"; it is one of the most unenviable

positions I have ever been placed in. I luckily slept, how and why I do not know. I will not go back.'

They sailed on, Clifton reading the Bible and the *Strand* and *Century* magazines, until they arrived at Hells Gate Passage. Here the hunter he had engaged at Eskimo Point rebelled and would not go on. Clifton immediately went ashore and interviewed another hunter who was willing to hunt the musk-ox with him if his wife agreed — 'an amicable woman who did not care 2 straws — so he comes.' Clifton set up his tent and moved in 1,400 pounds of stores and trade goods.

The next day he bought a fine whale-boat, mast, sails, pump, everything for a double-barrelled muzzle-loader, 15 pounds of powder, 10 pounds shot and ball. He also bought three dogs for tobacco, ball and dags.

Clifton continued learning Eskimo and tried to join an Eskimo band, but they would have nothing to do with him. Then on the morning of 3 August, George Oman, the interpreter, told him that Atonguela, would take Clifton to his people at Chesterfield Inlet. George himself would return to Churchill. Clifton spent the rest of the day sorting out what to take with him and that night wrote: 'This is even rash for me, going by myself into a bitterly cold country with no interpreter'.

Atonguela, moreover, was now desperately ill. George and his brother had come down with influenza during the boat passage from Churchill and had now apparently passed it on. That night Clifton 'physicked' Atonguela with about 20 grains of quinine and two tablets of phenacetin, all at once, and covered him up with blankets.

On Thursday, 5 August 1897, Clifton wrote:

South wind, put everything together, fixed them in boat, said good-bye to George and Cattalo and went North with a wild Eskimo to an unknown land. How much in those few words. Later in the day we had a lot of rain, pitched camp at 7:30 P.M., bread, potted beef, cold tea. Atonguela very ill, gave him 3 blankets of mine, but he was as ill as a man could be.

Two days later they arrived at Chesterfield Inlet on the extreme northwest corner of Hudson Bay. Atonguela had now recovered and when they landed from the whale boat at an Eskimo encampment, he addressed the natives at length about Clifton. The outcome appeared to be satisfactory and Clifton pitched his tent and treated three of the men to Eno's Fruit Salts which they considered good medicine.

Clifton was now completely on his own with the Eskimos, knowing only a few words of their language, but he applied himself diligently to learning more and compiled his own dictionary of Eskimo words and expressions.

As they had to wait for snow and hard frost to make the musk-ox territory fit for travel by dog sled, they

remained in camp for the rest of August. They were also delayed by influenza, which broke out amongst the tribe and a number of them died. After each death, six days of mourning before burial were observed and no further move was possible till all the necessary rites had been carried out. Clifton did what he could, dosing them with rhubarb pills and playing the flute. When he played softly they grew sad and wept.

The Eskimos were kind to him and brought salmon and wildfowl, but cooking was a problem; driftwood was the only fuel available for open fires and was almost non-existent. Clifton had a coal-oil stove, but the wicks were defective. He finally cut up an old pair of mole-skin trousers which proved successful, but the fuel had to be carefully husbanded for the long cold months ahead. To cook his salmon, he wrapped strips of the fish in moss and then set fire to it.

By 20 August there were six dead in the camp and Clifton was deeply distressed. 'My advent among them seems to be most calamitous.' To add to his worries and discomfort, he contracted eczema and ringworm

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*Wild geese and ducks were now coming in abundance, so Clifton made a hide down river at some distance from Oxford House. Betts brought him breakfast and lunch.*

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and had lost the solace of his darkest hours, his beloved Shakespeare.

He was, however, getting on well with the natives:

The ladies think I am 'The Thing' and if I speak to them are highly pleased, my pronunciation is quite 'bon ton'. Had a bath in fresh water, very cold, when I came out many females were standing and sitting round my clothes and I had to walk placidly up and take possession, they seem to regard nature 'in toto' natural without clothes.

He then had a half-mile run and came back so hungry that he ate a ten-pound salmon. The ladies were impressed and he was offered a wife, but felt obliged to decline.

Clifton hunted with the tribe, as deer were fairly plentiful and the men were much impressed by his prowess with the rifle. He was still rather upset by the sight of the Eskimos cutting up a deer and eating the entrails raw.

When sufficient fuel was available, he ate well himself: 'Had luxuriant supper, fried deer meat, bread,



pepper, yellow berries and sugar, and also hot tea. Ye Gods and little fishes what is the matter with that?"

On the second day of September they left 'Dead Man's Point', as Clifton had called the last camp. Thirty-five people with sleds, dogs and equipment were carried in three boats, and with a spanking southerly wind they entered Chesterfield Inlet. For the next twenty days they moved about hunting and fishing till they finally established a permanent camp as a base from which to travel to the Barren Grounds lying to the north, in search of the musk-ox. The weather was now hardening into the arctic winter with hard frost and blizzards of snow, and Clifton was minding the cold.

He now had a badly swollen hand and a cut tongue, as the filling had come out of a tooth, which became so painful that he asked Atonguela to draw it with his tooth nippers.

For the next three days Clifton stayed in camp suffering pain which became so intense that he took 32 drops of laudanum and awoke the next morning with the pain gone. He had his boots chewed by an Eskimo woman to soften them before putting them on and found a piece of red flannel 'a great comfort for tooth and mind in general'.

Deer hunting was going on all the time, the carcasses being cached to provide food for the camp while the men were away on the musk-ox expedition. Clifton was again cast down by ill health and depression; he had hardly any feeling in his left jaw and lip, it was snowing heavily, and he considered that he was in no condition for cold weather and hardship, 'but will stick it as long as I can'.

On 5 October he called Atonguela and said he would start back for Churchill immediately, but Atonguela refused to go, saying the boat would be caught in the ice — 'which I think is a lie, told him to be hanged and would get someone else; but no opportunity of finding someone else, the snow not deep enough to sleigh back, so am in deuce of a fix.'

By the next day he had resigned himself to the situation and moved into Atonguela's snowhouse, as his tent was too cold to live in. He was now being looked after by an Eskimo woman, Cuckoo Koone, who helped him to bring in supplies from his cache, including soap: 'I don't know why, I don't wash.' The weather grew colder and blizzards swept snow over the camp. As the snow deepened to six feet the construction of a large snowhouse was commenced. When completed it was about thirty feet in diameter, with a smaller one for cooking and another about twenty-four feet in diameter for the women. About half the area of the main snowhouse consisted of a raised dais, on which Clifton had his own ledge, in all about two feet high with seven feet headroom. Here they all turned in stark naked and when the atmosphere warmed up, water

dripped from the roof. Sometimes there was 15 degrees of frost in the house, and as they gutted and cut up deer inside, the stench would become almost intolerable.

When the weather permitted, the men, accompanied by Clifton, hunted for deer. Fat was especially prized and one day Clifton shot a magnificent stag with three fingers of fat on the haunches. He still suffered intensely from the cold and his aristocratic hooked nose was particularly prone to freezing. When this happened, one of the Eskimo would warm it with his hand. His own hands also suffered, especially when hunting and carrying a rifle, the trigger mechanism of which sometimes froze. When he came in from hunting the women would warm his hands in their own, and on one occasion, having gone out for a few minutes without his

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*... his aristocratic hooked nose was particularly prone to freezing. When this happened one of the Eskimos would warm it with his hand.*

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gloves and coming back suffering frightful pain, 'a woman warmed my hands by putting them next her skin under her fur chemise. They all seem to be at boiling heat!'

The days dragged on, as the ice had to be four feet thick before the Eskimos would enter musk-ox country. When wind and snow made hunting impossible they had to remain in the snowhouse; two women were always busy stitching fur clothing and making mitts and fur boots. In order to thaw out the boots and make them supple and wearable, the women chewed them, and to dry out Clifton's socks, they hung them round their necks next to the skin. The women were making additional clothing for the musk-ox hunt, and Cuckoo brought him a pair of gloves and boots for which he paid her with packets of needles. 'Her mother, a wretched old woman, cursed me afterwards, why no one knows. I think it is because I do not return Cuckoo's affection: curious people.' His outfit for the musk-ox hunt was two fur coats, two pairs of boots, two pairs of fur stockings and two pairs of gloves.

To relieve the monotony of waiting, Clifton organized leap-frog and jumping competitions for the boys, got the women singing, played with an eighteen-months-old baby, and one night: 'Watching women catching bugs off another woman and eating'em. The women will never be celebrated for their modesty.'

At last on 16 November, they started for musk-ox country: Atonguela and his brother with Acoulah,

Monah, Ahwateir, Kinohena and Clifton, with a large sleigh pulled by eight dogs and a smaller one pulled by four dogs. For the next nine days they travelled, camping at night in snowhouses they built for shelter against the piercing winds. Seal oil was used for the

ping the dog fights. The next day his hands and nose were frozen and he spent the day in camp. He wrote:

*30 November:* So ends my 28th year; we are in a land of desolation, if we do not find musk-ox, starvation will be the only fare for the dogs and probably ourselves. There are not deer enough in this part of the country, as two a day are required for the dogs and one for ourselves. It has been an uneventful year and things have passed very smoothly for me, though my ideas of A. when he was only 13 have been only too truly correct. Good bye 28.

*1 December:* Not having seen any musk-ox and a long distance accomplished, the men asked me to give an offering of a little tobacco and one match to Mother Earth and ask her to give us a musk-ox. Well, two hours after starting we reached a high hill. Atonguela called me to follow and within the hearing of the two sleighs uncovered his head and asked for musk-ox. He then asked me to repeat these words [written as they sounded to his ear] and hold exposed to the winds, 2 pieces of bone, tobacco, 1 match and fur: '*Heaute illeuliah itoro mit, itunga somingane mit*' — Oh Mother Earth, I give you this, give me something and that, musk-ox. Whether I have turned heathen or not, don't know; no refusing. Their dark frowning faces brightened up. We saw deer pretty close, did not disturb them and one hour before sunset saw 2 musk-ox in a valley surrounded by high hills, made camp by a little lake in the mountains and tomorrow, shoot. Exciting birthday, 29.

*2 December:* They had a long stupid talk about the musk-ox having heard the dogs before starting and were furious when I said no. We then took off at a run through deep snow and kept it up over mountains and lakes all day. The middle of the day I was dead beat. We saw a quantity of deer who went off and frightened the musk-ox. Before sunset I was a quarter mile behind and heard Agilue and Kallipalick [two dogs], spurted up hill, took my rifle from Atonguela, watched the brute charging the dogs and went within 30 yards. It suddenly came charging right at me where the dog was [at his feet]. My coat was too big [the sleeves had stretched and slipped down over his hands], fired over it and we looked at each other . . . Loaded again, killed it close to. It is much bigger than I thought. I cannot say if they would charge a man. Had the head cut off and four hours after dusk reached camp.

The dogs had not been fed for three days and each were given four pounds of musk-ox flesh. The men also ate it, but all had hiccoughs afterwards as it was so tough. No more musk-ox were seen and Clifton having got his trophy, was anxious to return to civilization,

very limited amount of cooking Atonguela permitted; as the oil had to be sparingly used, enough meat was cooked at one time to last several days. They hunted as they went and if they did not kill enough the dogs went hungry. To begin with Clifton was in high spirits. 'Capital fun, makes up for all the hardships I have gone through so far, no weak man could stand it, though I had a wretched night. Dogs look like barrels from eating deer flesh.'

As they progressed, the country became more hilly, and on the twelfth day he recorded the altitude as 1,200 feet above sea-level. They were now in musk-ox country and were anxiously looking for their quarry. Clifton was suffering from the cold and his temper was becoming frayed. On 27 November he lost his temper completely and cursed the hunters for not stop-



'to see New York once more and hear my native tongue'. The Eskimos were not pleased. Having come so far, they did not wish to return empty-handed. He placated them, however, by promising each man a rifle and ammunition, far superior to the muzzle-loading, smooth-bore guns usually obtained by trading.

They started back for camp on Chesterfield Inlet, but food was running out and no deer were sighted. The dogs were thin and starving. Four days after killing the musk-ox, they were living on meat extract and small pieces of biscuit. Then deer were sighted, but the weather was so still and quiet that footfalls of man and beast could be heard squeaking in the dry powdery snow half a mile away, making stalking impossible. On 11 December the nearest cache of deer meat was still four sleeps away and all were starving.

Snowing. The foolish men would not start and went after deer. Three made camp further on, not a scrap of food in the igloo. I remained in bed, not knowing their plans. Later Atonguela turned up having missed, then Illanah, also having missed. I was furious. Eat my last piece of biscuit, boiled tea over again for the third time. I feel hungry, with neuralgia and a sore throat; no one could go through a rougher time, bitter cold and scarcity of food and thoughts for the miserable dogs outside. Tetra's [one of the dogs] teeth chattered today. Snow or not we start tomorrow. No tea, tobacco, biscuits or food of any sort left. It is worse than Hell.

The next day Atonguela killed a deer and they all ate. The dogs were given enough to keep them going, the first feed in 10 days. Clifton noted that the Eskimos seem to accept starvation as a matter of course. At his insistence they made camp the following day and hunted till they got food for the dogs. On 14 December three deer were shot and the dogs were saved. The dogs were fed in turn, each being taken into the snowhouse so that it got its fair share. It now transpired that the three men who had gone on ahead to make camp on the eleventh had made straight across country to their home — 'a very dirty scurvy trick, leaving us with sleighs and dogs without food'.

The sixteenth was a bad day with heavy snow and they pushed on at a walk for many hours without covering a great deal of ground. Again there was no food for the dogs, and when they made camp, constructing the usual snowhouse, Clifton turned in without his supper, being too tired and cold to eat, telling Atonguela to 'send my corpse to Churchill'.

The next day they abandoned all the heavy things and hitching twelve dogs to one sleigh, set off at a great pace which they kept up till late at night. Long before daylight they started again, the dogs not running well. By noon they reached a cache of meat, but the fat which they desperately needed had been cut

off. It was the same at the second cache, but at a third there was fat and meat. Men and dogs ate well that night. There was also 'splendid deep hard snow' to make a good camp and they were heartened as the next day they would reach the base camp on Chesterfield Inlet.

On Sunday, 19 December 1897: Clifton wrote: 'All things good or bad must have an end. Arrived igloo evening, there all the women fastened round my belt little pieces of deer skin, which shows that I am a full fledged hunter.'

Clifton enjoyed excellent boiled deer flesh with a fine hunk of fat. He was determined to push on overland to Churchill, the distance he reckoned to be 350 miles on a compass course. Who was to accompany him? Atonguela and Illanah would go, but as Clifton's hands were by now almost useless from the cold, more help was needed. He distributed all the things he no longer needed for the return journey to Churchill

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*Clifton turned in without supper,  
being too tired and cold to eat,  
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corpse to Churchill'.*

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amongst the tribe — with the exception of the three men who had deserted him, who got nothing. He told Atonguela that he would honour the original arrangement whereby the men who went with him to hunt the musk-ox should have rifles, but unless they accompanied him to Churchill they would get no cartridges for the rifles.

Once again inactivity and delay was getting on his nerves. 'These people have disgusted me quite. Atonguela's woman leads by 40 lengths. I have given her tea, flour, tobacco, everything.' On Christmas Eve he was still furious with Atonguela's woman and told her husband to keep her in order. Then he gave some beads she had been looking forward to, to another woman — 'bitter tears in consequence — I was awful mad!'

A little later Atonguela came into the igloo and after sending everyone out, closed the door, putting a large piece of ice across the entrance. He turned to Clifton happily: 'Peaceably we talked about the journey. We start in 6 sleeps. The woman Cuckoo is coming, which I think very amusing. I have a fair knowledge why she is. All is peaceful tonight, Xmas Eve. Stocking up.' On next day he wrote:

Fine Xmas breakfast, deer flesh with a big lump of

fat. On opening the tin wherein the plum pudding had been kept for nearly six months, I cut two fingers badly. An hour after I warmed it up, gave Atonguela and his women some and with a beautifully boiled deer's tongue and plum pudding had an excellent Xmas dinner. Later on had marrow and boiled deer flesh with plenty of fat, so altogether I cannot complain at my Xmas fare. I hung my stocking up but Santa Claus found this region too cold, I suppose, for the stocking was bare.

Will I get musk-ox head to England in safety? Five sleeps more and we start. 60 days ought to find us in Winnipeg.

At last on 30 December they were off, leaving the people fighting and scrambling for the things he was leaving behind. New Year's Eve found them bowling along Chesterfield Inlet, the dogs going well.

How memory reverts back to distant years on the last day of a year, how different this is from all thoughts of comfort which at this time of the year civilization puts forth, every luxury and comfort to cheer the hearts of men to struggle against the coming year. Well this is a nice warm snow igloo tonight and I hope to dream of bells.

The overland journey from Chesterfield Inlet to Fort Churchill took forty-six days and not twenty as Clifton had hoped. Much time had to be expended in hunting to provide enough meat to feed the dogs, men and Cuckoo. The latter had as good an appetite as the men and 'puts away a lot of fat when no one is watching'.

The reason for making her one of the party soon became clear. Atonguela was 'mashing her hand'. This slowed down the journey, as it became noticeable that Atonguela was happy to make camp on any excuse so that he could continue his romantic activities in the comfort of a new house. Another awkward result of this amour was that Cuckoo praised Clifton's shooting, which made Atonguela jealous and put him in foul temper. 'He is like an overgrown schoolboy.'

Fortunately deer were plentiful, as cold hands and frozen triggers caused frequent misses. 'Five times we came right across deer, I shot remarkably badly but they were all difficult shots except one which I got, a hind, in the morning and just before camping, a stag, which was a long difficult shot.'

Cuckoo was quite useful about the camp, but did things with a bad grace. The meat diet was accompanied by flapjacks made by Cuckoo and bread made by Atonguela 'with his dirty paws . . . Cuckoo cooks it in fat!'

Some days when the wind blew strong from the north they set a blanket sail on the sleigh, which helped the dogs and they made good progress. Tempers were

again edgy. Atonguela was in a foul temper and rude, so Clifton was rude back, which subdued him. While Clifton suffered agonies from cold and ill health, the dogs were fed and going well, and by 3 February he reckoned they had only three days to go to reach Churchill.

Then on 4 February 1898 he wrote: 'All my hopes of reaching Churchill in two days were shattered. After crossing an endless plain we came to field ice. . . . Atonguela said he knew the way so led us 150 miles west out of the way, where my compass would have brought us to the sea and Churchill long ago. Very sad, we went on till sunset amongst the hummocks of ice that looked like tombstones to me and with much difficulty made a snow house, as very little snow.'

It was another nine days before they reached Churchill. The weather was 30 degrees below zero with a strong wind. The men helped the dogs to pull the sleigh. Deer were in abundance; one day they passed over a thousand head. Some driftwood was found, but fuel was still a problem. There was no water, and snow and ice had to be melted to make tea. Sometimes it was full of deer hairs and nauseating. They were skirting along the coast, sometimes on the frozen sea and sometimes on the land, but always the going was rough. On 10 February they saw trees, the first Illanah and Cuckoo had ever seen. Clifton was in poor shape and on the twelfth, being sure they were near Churchill, decided to make a dash for it. On the evening of the thirteenth they arrived at Fort Churchill after dark.

Mr. and Mrs. Hawes were more than kind, as weary and worn out after six weeks and a half hard travelling in the coldest time of the year, in one of the coldest countries in the world, I found a great rest. My life among the Eskimo ends here forever.

On 25 March 1898, Clifton wrote to his agent at Lytham — addressing his letter from Norway House — saying that he was hurrying back to Winnipeg as fast as his dogs would go, carrying his precious musk-ox trophy and the mails from Churchill, York, Oxford and Norway House. Atonguela accompanied him, but suffered dreadfully from the heat in the Winnipeg hotel. 'A boy passing on a bicycle was the only sight that affected him. He fell on the roadside, a huddled mass, shaking with laughter.'

Clifton looked upon the dog, Agilue, as the saviour of his life, as he never lost courage and led on the others. Agilue and the sled dog, Arois, ended their days in Scotland; Talbot Clifton died in 1928, in Santa Cruz, an adventurer to the last. ♦

## Grassy Narrows Post, 1930

By Hugh Mackay Ross

*In early July, 1930, Hugh Mackay Ross, age 18, from Rothes, Scotland, arrived by train at Jones Station in northern Ontario. There he spent an uncomfortable night in the railway bunkhouse wondering why he had ever left Scotland. In the morning a canoe paddled by two Indians arrived to take him out to the island trading post of Grassy Narrows. There he was to begin work as a fur-trade apprentice under a five-year contract to the Hudson's Bay Company.*



*Hugh Ross, 1933, with dog-team: four hard-working black and white collies. Photographs are from the author's collection.*

EARLY NEXT DAY I was up and about, to explore the new home that I had been too tired to see when we arrived. Grassy Narrows is part of the English River system which flows through a series of lakes from Lac Seul in northern Ontario west to the Manitoba-Ontario boundary where it joins the Winnipeg River and enters Lake Winnipeg near Fort Alexander. The post was built on a large island about eleven acres in size and roughly in the shape of a whale's hump. The mainland around the lake constituted the Grassy Narrows Indian Reserve. All their houses were built on the north and east sides which were flat and meadow-like, hence the name. The rest of the mainland was rocky, covered with beautiful stands of spruce and jackpine trees. There was a large number of small, tree-covered, rocky islands dotting the surface of the lake, very reminiscent of Scotland to me.

The post consisted of a log dwelling, a trading store and two small warehouses, positioned roughly in a square, right on top of the island which had been cleared of all growth as a fire protection.

Around the island, there were many clumps of birch and poplar trees as well as alder and saskatoon bushes. On the eastern end, there was a small beach. The dwelling house was beautifully constructed of squared logs dovetailed at the corners. The interstices of the logs were filled with lime plaster and the whole exterior whitewashed.

The roof was covered with large square tin shingles of a variety I had never seen before or since. These were about a foot square and interlocked in such a way that they were completely waterproof. And of



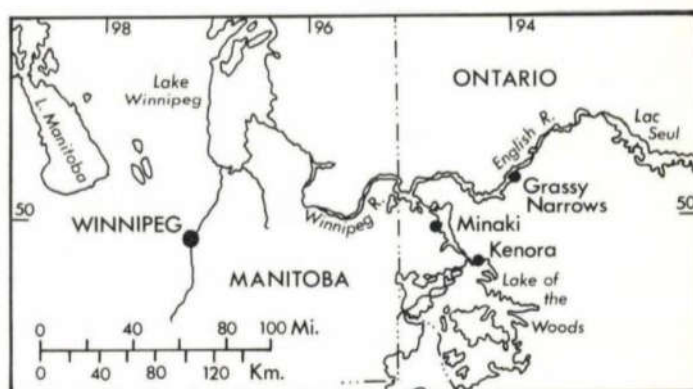
*Grassy Narrows from the air.*



*Grassy Narrows post, 1930.*

course they were a great protection against fire. Inside, the house was divided into four rooms; living-room, bedroom, office (that served also as my bedroom) and kitchen. The walls were lined with beautiful tongue-and-groove pine which, unfortunately, was painted with canoe enamel in strange colours of crimson, gray and green. The house was heated by a large iron heater shaped like a barrel and long enough to take four-foot logs. It stood in the middle of the living-room and was only lit during the winter.

The same type of heater was in the store, a storey and a half framed building. The outside walls were covered with a heavy rubberoid and painted white, with the Hudson's Bay Company sign in old English lettering above the door. The two small warehouses were built of logs, with flat, sloping roofs, just like sheds. All the buildings were white with dark green trim around the windows and doors. The roof and the doors were painted red. These were the standard Company colours and used at every post.



After breakfast, I handed Mr Murchison, the post manager, the letter of introduction with which I had been provided at District Office. He read it slowly, stuffed it in his pocket and then spoke to me in a language which I didn't understand. I looked at him in surprise. Did he expect me to know Indian? Then, in English, he asked, 'You don't have the Gaelic, do you?' When I answered in the negative, he snorted. 'Humph! A hell of a fine Scotsman you are'. And that was me, catalogued.

Donald Murchison was born on the island of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. He joined the Company as a labourer at Stromness in the Orkney Islands in 1884 and sailed from there directly through Hudson Strait into James Bay. He saw service at various posts including Abitibi and Grand Lac. During this time, he was promoted from labourer to store assistant and eventually to post manager. He ended up in charge of Namaska where he stayed for many years, then moving south to the charge of Nipigon House. Enroute to Nipigon House, he saw and rode in a railway train for the first time in his life. He had been at Grassy Narrows for a few years and was getting close to retirement.

Mrs Murchison, his second wife, was an Indian woman from Nipigon House. They had three daughters, two teenagers and one about twenty-four; an older son Johnny, and a young son about twelve named Kenneth. The oldest daughter, Mary, had two children. The family talked Ojibway in the house all the time, except when they had to speak to me. It always puzzled me how or where they all slept, because they all crowded into the one bedroom at night with the exception of Johnny, who slept in his sleeping bag on the living-room floor.

That first breakfast was really strange. The boss and I sat at the table in the living-room and were waited on by his family, who afterwards ate separately in the kitchen. This was to be the normal procedure during my stay at Grassy Narrows. Donald rarely left the island or in fact, the house. His only trip every day was to go down to the shore to feed the sled dogs. Other than that, he only went to the store when a customer appeared. He always put on his official H B C hat — a sort of naval cap, the type we called a 'cheesecutter'. It had a red enamel Hudson's Bay flag brooch in front, surrounded by gold leaves. This had been a standard uniform introduced by a previous fur trade commissioner. An apprentice clerk wore a plain cap with only a flag; a post manager's had the flag and gold leaves, and a district manager's cap had a flag, gold leaves and a bunch of scrambled eggs as well. I never did have one of these caps and shortly afterwards, the usage was discontinued.

Mr Murchison was a peculiar man. He walked up and down the living-room of the house for hours, never saying a word. He must have done this for years,



*Dwelling house at Grassy Narrows, 1930.*

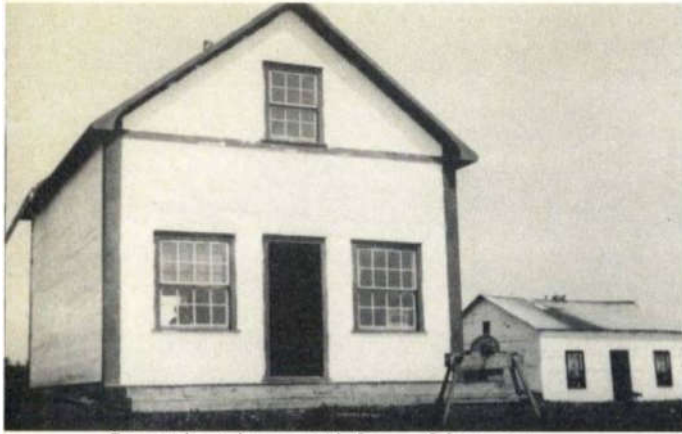
because the linoleum where he walked was worn bare. He had two favourite expressions. One was 'It will be all the same a hundred years from now' and the other 'Don't mind the expense, it's coming off a broad back'.

Johnny, the eldest son, had been sent to Kenora the previous fall. In an endeavour to give him a good start in life, his father had bought him a complete set of mechanic's tools and had gotten him a job in a garage to learn the trade. When spring rolled around, however, Johnny got itchy feet and sold all the tools. He bought himself a second-hand canoe and paddled all the way back from Kenora. He did nothing all summer other than mingle with the natives playing poker. In the winter, he ran a wintering outpost called Long Legged Outpost which was open from October to the end of May.

The Murchison girls were kept very much under their father's thumb. They were not allowed to go anywhere by themselves. If a canoe party showed up, the girls were shooed into the house; then Donald would meet the visitors, talk with them and sell them any goods they wanted from the store. But he never invited anyone into the house. He wanted the girls to make good marriages but how they were to meet anyone suitable was beyond me.

Even I was not immune from Donald's suspicions. Anytime I walked around the island, I was shadowed by little Kenneth or the boss's sleigh dog Caesar and I knew Donald was not too far behind. It got to be quite a game. Each time I went out of the house, I knew I was being followed so I would wander all around the island, glancing backwards for the occasional glimpse of a young boy or a black and white dog.

Every two months or so, Donald would have a case of whisky sent in from Kenora. Then he would start drinking, a tumbler of half whisky and half water, every half hour for as long as he could stand up. Then he went to bed, but the same glass had to be brought



*Store with grindstone outside for use of the trappers. Grassy Narrows, c. 1921.*

to him every thirty minutes until there was only half a bottle left.

On one occasion when he was drunk, he lined up his daughters and told me to take my pick. His wife grabbed a broom, shook it in my face and said, 'Just you dare'. Since he never mentioned it when he sobered up, I don't think he remembered the incident at all.

The trading store was a new world for me. A large heater sat in the centre of the floor, with a long serving counter running along each side of the store, and behind each counter were rows of shelving filled with trade goods. A stairway ran up one wall to the attic where extra stocks of drygoods and hardware were stored neatly in rows. This attic was also used to hold the furs we purchased from the trappers in the winter. The skins were strung in bundles and hung on nails from the rafters. The fur-baling press was kept in the space under the stairs.

The grocery department was on the left-hand side. There was lard in one-pound packages and three-, five- and ten-pound pails. Lard was the mainstay of the Indians and they used it instead of butter. They seemed to have a crying need for fat of one kind or another, as there was little fat on the carcasses of the deer that they shot. They could eat as much as a pound of lard a day. Baking powder for making bannock stood next to parcels of salt and tins of black pepper.

There were rows of canned fruit — peaches, pears and pineapple; followed by canned vegetables — tomatoes, sweet corn and peas; and Clark's pork and beans — the staff of life in the North. One-pound tins of Wagstaff's assorted jam stood next to Lyle's Golden Syrup. Tea, in one-pound and half-pound packages, stood next to Eagle Brand condensed milk.

The tobacco section held tins of plug tobacco — MacDonald's Briar Plug pipe tobacco and Prince of Wales chewing tobacco plus Copenhagen Snuff. I hadn't heard of this but apparently the Indians couldn't



*The Company's District Manager S.J.C. Cummings arrives in a Gypsy Moth at Grassy Narrows, 1930.*

live without it. They might have to do without tea but if they had to go without snuff for a day, they became sick, literally. Men, women and children stuffed it between their lips and gums, both upper and lower. I thought it a disgusting habit, especially the incessant spitting that accompanied it. There were also a few packets of fine cut tobacco and Zig-Zag cigarette papers. So this was what the cowboys I had seen in the silent movies used to roll their cigarettes. I tried it out and made a mess of it at first, but pretty soon I got the hang of it, especially when I ran out of tailor-mades. I could roll my own with the best of them.

The bottom shelves held ten-pound bags of sugar and six-pound bags of rolled oats; 25-pound boxes of sweet biscuits and dried fruits — raisins, apples and prunes. The dried fruit was used to make home brew. It was against Company policy to sell yeast cakes to the Indians but they always were able to get supplies of this at the railroad track. So the brew kettles were always on.

Under the counter were large barrels containing bulk supplies of white and brown sugar, corn meal, rice and navy beans. All bulk goods were weighed out on the old-fashioned beam scale that stood on the counter. Matches were kept under the counter in a metal-lined box — a precaution against fire — the scourge of the North. There was a barrel of hard-tack biscuits, there being no such thing as fresh bread. These biscuits were rock hard but very sustaining, especially when smothered in strawberry jam and washed down with lots of strong, sweet tea.

The last section of shelving contained drugs and candy. There were various liniments such as Perry-Davis Painkiller, Minard's Liniment and Eclectic Oil. We had to be extremely careful in selling patent medicines to the Indians, as it was contrary to the Indian Act to sell them anything containing alcohol. We had pills for everything — Carter's Little Liver Pills; Gin Pills, which caused the urine to turn green and delighted the Indians; Beecham's Pills and Dodd's Kidney Pills. And, of course, aspirin.

With the exception of two chocolate bars — Oh Henry and Sweet Marie — chewing gum and Cracker Jack, all our candy was in bulk. The Christmas mixture of hard candy was a favourite, along with hard Scotch mints and jelly beans. It was seldom an Indian traded in the store without buying some candy for his children.

Across on the other side of the store were the dry-goods and hardware sections. The drygoods were mainly various types of cloth, sold by the yard. The women made up their own dresses. Prints in floral patterns of reds, blues and greens were the big favourites especially among the younger ones. The older women were very conservative and usually bought a better quality print, 'Magog'. It came in navy or black with a small white floral spray pattern. Prints and flannelette sold at three yards for \$1.00 and Magog at 50¢ per yard. We also had Galaplaid, an all-wool tartan material which sold at \$2.50 a yard and was mostly used to trim babies' cradles or 'tikanagans', as the Indians called the papoose carriers. Coloured strouds and Superfine cloth, very expensive, were sold for trimming mukluks. Factory cotton, unbleached cotton and cheesecloth were bought to make mosquito nets. The bottom shelves held gray flannelette sheets and quilted comforters piled next to bolts of canvas duck. This duck came in various weights from six to twelve-ounce and was used for everything from making tents to recovering canoes.

The women's section was spartan. Underwear consisted of fleece-lined bloomers; hosiery — brown lisle stockings for summer and black worsted stockings for winter. Headgear consisted of Basque berets, bright woollen toques and brightly coloured satin head squares. For the older women, there were black cashmere fringed shawls. Heavy jumbo-knit wool sweaters served for both men and women but the women's had sailor collars and the men's, rolled shawl collars.

In men's wear, we had Penman's wool socks in various weights from two and a half to five pounds; brown cotton gloves and woollen mitts to be worn under deer-skin mitts. We carried no wool underwear as it was too expensive, only the fleece-lined — mostly separate shirts and drawers — with a few pairs of combinations for the more modern minded customers. Black or blue denim overall pants were the order of the day, with a

few pairs of bib overalls. These were normally carried in sizes 40, 42 and 44. If you wanted a smaller size, you bought a size 40 and your wife took in a tuck at the waist. Denim jackets were worn in winter to break the wind with a cotton shirt underneath. In summer, the men wore light coloured Donegal tweed caps and in winter, navy blue or black melton caps with fur-lined earbands.

From the ceiling beams hung sneakers or running shoes, which the young people bought in the summer, and moccasin rubbers, the universal footwear. These moccasin rubbers were a sort of heel-less overshoe which slipped over deerskin moccasins. They were worn summer and winter and were slipped on and off when going outdoors or coming in. They kept your feet dry whether you were in a canoe or walking in the snow.

In the notions department were rolls of brightly coloured satin ribbon of various widths, used as hair ribbons and to decorate dresses or cradles. There were barrettes and bobbie pins; black and white thread in various sizes; and needles, glover's needles and sewing-machine needles. The glover's needle had a sharp, three-cornered point and was used in sewing deerskins. For decorating moccasins, we had skeins of embroidery silk and a large selection of coloured seed beads. These were small, round beads which came in strings and were made in Czechoslovakia.

The hardware contained ammunition, of course, mostly 30.30 and 44.40 calibres which were the popular weapons, along with 12-gauge shotgun shells and .22 shells. There were all sizes of sheet tin and retinned pails with bailed handles which were used for all cooking purposes, mainly because they could be hung over an open fire.

Fry pans, enamel mugs and tin plates stood next to tin basins and milk pans. The tools included assorted files, awls, gimlets and crooked knives — an indispensable tool for shaping canoe paddles or snowshoes; copper rivets and burrs for mending harness mingled with one-ounce rolls of brass rabbit-snare wire and 16 and 20 strand coils of cable snare wire for foxes and wolves. The lower shelves held Gilling twine, 16 one-ounce balls to the packet for sewing moccasins or making fish nets; and hanks of seaming and backing twine, also for fish nets. There were skeins of No. 7 and No. 9 twine for making snares and hanks of codline for lashing toboggans.

Under the counter were boxes of Victor steel traps for trapping anything from an ermine to a beaver. Next to them sat kegs holding nails of all sizes from shingle nails to eight-inch spikes and rolls of sheet-metal stove pipes, stove elbows, roof jacks and dampers.

One warehouse held cases of groceries, plus our flour supplies in 24-, 49- and 98-pound sacks. Flour was shipped in heavy canvas bags to protect the fragile cotton sacks from damage when being carried over



*Hugh Ross behind the counter at Minaki, 1934. His customer — Beatrice Dingle, a Winnipeg school teacher, who later became his wife.*

*Ojibway trapper Tempeh Skatchay-Keesik of Grassy Narrows, 1931. A 6'2" model for clothing from the trading store.*



portages. This was called 'Osnaburgh Packing'. These heavy canvas bags were greatly sought after by the Indians. There was also a huge pile of 'D.S.B.' — dry salt bellies — pork in jute sacks. The Indians loved it for its fat and bought it at every opportunity.

One end of the other warehouse held roofing and building paper. There were rolls of heavy brown or green Kraft building paper for lining the interior of log houses and light tarpaper or heavy slate roofing for covering house roofs. The other end held the Indian Department Relief Supplies. Every month, the old people came over to collect their ration of flour, baking powder, salt pork, tea, salt and navy beans. These stocks were shipped in by the Department of Indian Affairs and we stored and distributed them at no cost. The first of each month was always a busy day until all the old timers had received their ration.

A small shed apart from all the other buildings held our coal oil. This came in two four-gallon tins to the case, for ease in portaging. In winter, it was difficult to pour out coal oil as, in extremely cold weather, it thickened to the consistency of molasses.

After the boss had shown me around, I asked him what my duties would be. He told me that there was no future in learning to be a post manager. If I really wanted to get on in the Company's service, I should be an accountant and of course, to do that, I must learn to do the books. 'This is a great opportunity for you. The Company has started a new system of book-

keeping. I don't know anything about it and you may as well take it over and be the bookkeeper at this post.'

The new set of books and forms were in the office, which also served as my bedroom, along with detailed instructions on how this system was to operate. I didn't know anything about keeping books. Before I left the Old Country, I had questioned my schoolmaster on this subject and he advised me that the most common system of bookkeeping was double-entry and each different company had its own system of doing it. The main thing to remember was that wherever there was a debit, there had to be a credit in another account in the same amount and when the totals in all accounts were added up, they should balance. I read the instructions very carefully, studied all the examples which were attached and very soon got the hang of it.

So began the career of Hugh Mackay Ross that lasted 47 years, from 1930 to 1977, with the Hudson's Bay Company.

*In retirement at Winnipeg, Hugh Ross is writing about his years at fur-trade posts in northern Ontario. This article is an extract from a book-length manuscript to be published in 1986 by Watson and Dwyer Publishers of Winnipeg.* ♦

# *The Bremner Furs*

By Margaret R. Stobie

IN 1881, A GROUP of prosperous Headingley farmers — the Bremners, Sayers and Taylors — took advantage of the real estate boom in nearby Winnipeg to sell their farms and move northwest to the area of Battleford, which was the capital of the North-West Territories and where there was plenty of land for expanding families. Moreover, they could get land information from Patrick Gammie Laurie, editor of the *Saskatchewan Herald*, the first newspaper west of Winnipeg, whom they had known when he was in the Red River Settlement. The location they chose was about 25 miles west of Battleford, on the north bank of the Battle River, across from Poundmaker's reserve. They called the place Bresaylor, after the three founding families.

The little settlement prospered. All of Scotch-Indian descent and speaking Cree, they were on friendly terms with Poundmaker — one of the Taylors acted as his handyman — and the Indians brought their furs to Charles Bremner's little trading store. Headingley friends came up to join them (Bremner's second daughter married Louis Caplette, a cousin from Headingley) and by 1884 Bresaylor boasted a population of 200, on 50 farms.

Charles Bremner was doing particularly well. Crops were good, he had acquired some 80 head of cattle, he made his trading preparations during the summer with goods shipped from Winnipeg, and he was expanding his fur sources beyond the Battle River area. He packed the furs in carts as they were brought to him, and by mid-March in 1885 he had nearly 20 packs of furs in his large farmyard, representing a small fortune. They were ready to be moved south in the spring when he would sell them in Winnipeg.

But for well over a year there had been restlessness among the Indians. It came largely from the bands whom the government had moved up from the International Border to prevent clashes there, among them Big Bear's band who arrived in Battleford — 'hungry but saucy', Laurie wrote. At the same time, the capital of the Territories, and therefore the centre of authority, had been moved south to Regina. The combination of moves was not a happy one.

By the spring of 1884, not one but three reserves stretched for nine miles along the Battle River opposite the little Métis settlement. A conference of the chiefs, with Big Bear present too, was held on Poundmaker's reserve, and plans were laid for a great gathering the following spring of all the chiefs of the Saskatchewan Valley. They would make a concerted demand for a new treaty, for contiguous reserves throughout the area, for larger reserves for each band, and for more treaty money. They would, in effect, reclaim their ancient homeland. The conference was reinforced in mid-June by a great Thirst Dance on the flats of the Battle River, to which over two thousand Indians came. An ugly little fracas occurred when a couple of Big Bear's young men struck the farm instructor on one of the reserves, and the police came out from Battleford to arrest the assailants. The Bresaylor people were tense. As Laurie wrote, 'The Indians did not want to fire first, and they knew the police would not, but an accidental shot might have set a war going.'

Less than two weeks later, other disturbing news came, this time by telegraph to Battleford from the half-forgotten world of the Red River Métis on the South Branch. Louis Riel was on his way to Duck Lake; he arrived on 2 July. The Bresaylor settlers had not been among his supporters on the Red River in 1870, and they did not welcome his coming into the new land. But the doings on the South Branch were far away and need not concern them.

Yet the uneasiness grew. On New Year's Day, 1885, there were no friendly visits by Indians in either Battleford or Edmonton. At the beginning of March the drums started. Officially, there was unanimous word of peace — from Indian agents to Hayter Reed, Assistant Indian Commissioner; from him to Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney who passed it on to the Minister of the Interior, who reassured Parliament. Only Frank Oliver, in the *Edmonton Bulletin* and from his seat on

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*In this group of men, associated with the North-West Rebellion, are Big Bear (second from left, front row) and Poundmaker (front row, right). The Reverend Louis Cochin is in the back row, second from the left. Photograph taken at Regina in late 1885.*

the Territories Council, angrily insisted that no such happy state existed, that the Indians were discontented, and waiting only for a chance incident to set them off.

The explosive incident occurred on 26 March with the clash at Duck Lake between the Métis and the police, in which the police were routed. Almost immediately, the Battle River bands swept downstream to the Sweet Grass Reserve where they held council and decided to confront the Indian agent at Battleford with their demands. The crisis would give them power; this was the moment they had waited for.

But their approach created only terror. Outlying settlers fled to the police barracks on the Battleford heights, and so did the villagers on the flats, including the Laurie family and Indian Agent John Rae. Government officials fled south. When the Indians arrived at the government buildings on the morning of 30 March, only the cook was left. He fed them until supplies ran out.

Poundmaker sent a message to Rae asking him to meet with them, and Rae agreed to meet halfway between the barracks and the Indian camp, but before he and his two companions could come within speaking distance, some hot-heads fired on them and they returned straightway to the barracks. The parley for concessions was off. Worse was to come. Stoney and Red Pheasant men galloped in from the south; two white men had been killed by their people. What the chiefs had tried to avoid had happened; Indians had

fired first. They were now on the defensive, their advantage lost, reprisals sure, their journey useless.

The frustration produced a kind of frenzy in the host. That night the burning and looting of the village of Battleford began and continued all the next day. The Indians seized goods of all kinds from stores and private homes and drove all loose cattle and horses before them. As the mob fanned out over the countryside, they destroyed everything in their way. Fires of settlers' homes lit the night sky.

In Bresaylor there was panic. They were the only settlement in the path of the returning marauders. They gathered in Charles Bremner's large yard. Some were for making a break for Battleford. Others, considering the dangers of the twenty-five miles through roving bands of Indians and with women and children along, were for staying put, taking their chances and defending themselves as best they could.

Charles Bremner was of their mind. He argued that Poundmaker was friendly to them, that they had the protection of their Indian blood, and that the Battleford situation was a special one — part of the Indians' continuing problem with the Indian Department. For his own part, most of his money was tied up in the goods in the store and the furs in the carts; another very special reason for staying was his aged mother, now 95, and unlikely to survive such a journey.

That night, those who did not have his confidence, about ten or twelve families, set out for Battleford and arrived on 1 April. On the same day Poundmaker rode over to Bremner's place with about twenty men, to

assure them that he did not want to harm them. The settlers, on their part, said they wanted to have peace and to cultivate their farms. Poundmaker and his men rode away.

Two days later, a single horseman came galloping from the north with the news of the massacre at Frog Lake. Once more the settlers gathered in Bremner's yard, this time with their wagons and possessions, some fifteen families. They were still afraid of venturing across the no-man's-land to Battleford, and they sent a messenger asking for a police escort. In Battleford, it was thought to be a ploy to lure police away from the fort, and the messenger was locked up. As several days passed and neither police nor Indians arrived, Father Cochin, the missionary on Poundmaker's reserve, though he was shaken by the murder of the two priests at Frog Lake, nevertheless advised the company to return to their farms and do their usual work as they had told Poundmaker they wanted to do.

The Bremner neighbors had not yet dispersed when two Indians rode into their camp to tell them that Poundmaker had sent them ahead to say that he was sorry but the Indians were excited and he could not stop them. Quickly following the messengers, some two hundred armed horsemen surrounded the group. Poundmaker arrived. Cochin said, 'He told Mr. Bremner and the Half-breeds in my presence, "They come to take you."'

The Indians took all the horses in Bremner's stable, they looted the store, they shot the dogs, pigs, and hens in the farmyard, and they drove off some 300 head of settlers' cattle. 'I saw a lot of new hats and clothing on the Indians when they came out of the store,' Bremner said. 'They hitched up for me and we had to go.' Father Cochin was herded along with the rest to Poundmaker's camp. But along with the household goods in the wagons, Bremner managed to have his four carts of furs brought with him — his insurance for another day.

The camp was a huge one to which Indians from all the reserves of the area, even south of Battleford, had come to join Poundmaker. At first it was on a river flat bordering Cut Knife Creek which had steep banks with ravines thickly clothed with scrub willow and poplar, excellent defensive terrain. Camp was shifted about once a week, and on 30 April it was moved up on to the high plateau where, in the middle of the reserve, Cut Knife Hill rose above the surrounding country. The Bresaylor camp-within-a-camp was about a quarter of a mile from the Indian tents, towards the creek.

Two days later, on 2 May, there came a shout at dawn from the lookout, 'Friends, to arms!' Colonel Otter and his men were riding towards them. The Indians scurried down the ravine behind their camp, and when the soldiers topped the rise, they fired on empty tents.

In the coming of the army, the Bresaylor captives saw a possible chance of escape. Charles Bremner tried. He and four companions rode up to a high hill and waved a white flag, 'intending to go to the police,' he said, 'but they fired at us twice with the cannon.' Father Cochin tried, but his black robe had no more effect than Bremner's white flag. 'A shower of bullets fell around me. I briskly threw myself to the ground in a hollow.' The hope of deliverance was gone.

The battle lasted about seven or eight hours, with the military baffled by an unseen enemy that encircled them until they were shot at from behind as well as from in front. By mid-day, Colonel Otter ordered a retreat. There was no pursuit. Bremner took some of the credit for that: 'I told Poundmaker to stop his men and he said he would.' Poundmaker's explanation to his people was: 'to defend themselves and their wives and children was good, but he did not approve of taking the offensive. They had beaten off the enemy; let that content them.' That night there was a victory celebration. It was Poundmaker's triumph. He and Big

*'The Town of Battleford, occupied by the Rebels and Indians. 30 March 1885.'*





*A fanciful depiction of the battle of Cut Knife Creek, 2 May 1885.*

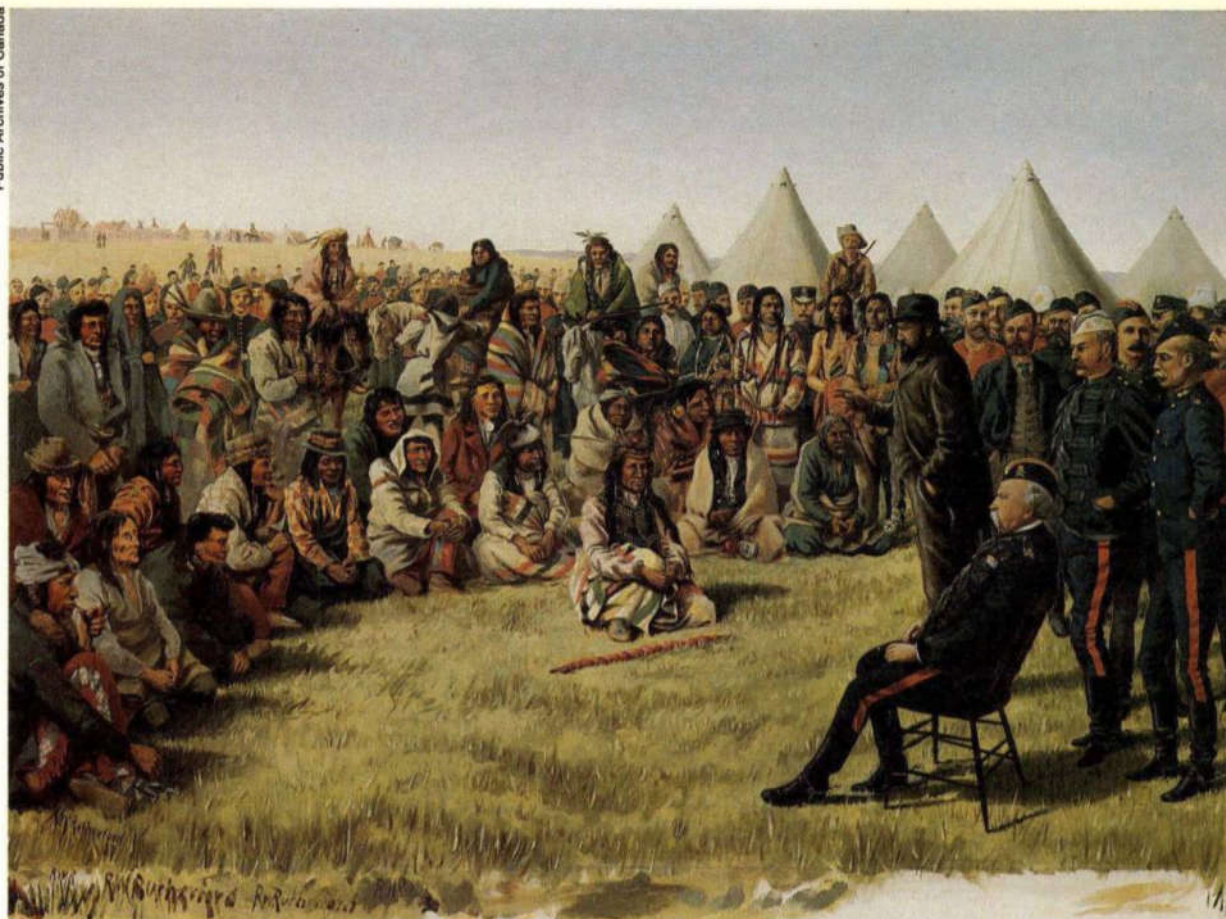
Bear between them controlled the Saskatchewan country from above Fort Pitt to beyond Battleford. They ruled once more their ancient land. The only white outpost was Battleford.

But the moment of glory did not last. The Indians could not stay where they were. They lacked any source of ammunition, and with Bresaylor beef fast disappearing they lacked any source of food. With General Middleton on the South Branch, Colonel Otter and the police at Battleford, and Major-General Strange on the path of Big Bear to the north, it would be only a matter of time before another force was sent against them. After several days of argument in the warriors' tent, they decided to join Riel. The whole camp moved east along the Battle River, keeping to the rough, broken country that bordered the prairie.

The Bresaylor captives perforce had to go along. Once more they struck their square tents, piled them and all their goods on the wagons, and distributed people as best they could. Charles Bremner determinedly kept his furs with him. They started over the rough ground. It was a dreary, wretched time for all of them, but particularly for Bremner's aged mother. She died on the first day out.

On the evening of the third day, the great company came to open prairie. Here, a rider came in haste from Duck Lake, saying that a desperate battle was in progress, that the Métis had been forced back to Batoche to make their last stand. They must have help at once or it would be too late. This was not the Indians' understanding of Riel's plan and their role in it. They did not move. On 19 May, another galloping horseman brought word, 'The battle is ended. Riel has surrendered himself. The General has granted peace to the Métis. Dumont has fled. Make peace. Make terms. Bring peace to the suffering country. That is Riel's word.'

There was nothing left for Poundmaker's men but surrender. He dictated letters of capitulation to Middleton and to Otter. He released the captives, and the Bresaylor caravan arrived in Battleford on the early morning of 26 May. The police commandant told Bremner to make camp on a large, flat space to the west of the barracks. But there was little welcoming. The reason lay in the *Herald's* report of the Cut Knife fight: 'A large number of Half-breeds, including many whose faces were familiar on the streets of Battleford, were recognised under the paint with which they



*The surrender of Poundmaker to Major-General Middleton at Battleford, 26 May 1885. From a painting by Robert William Rutherford.*

bedaubed themselves, and not a few of them paid the penalty of their perfidy.' The damning report, that passed sentence by innuendo on Bremner's people, not only caused hostility on their arrival at Battleford, it was copied by other newspapers and taken as a reliable, almost official account of the affair.

When Poundmaker and his men climbed to the Battleford heights, General Middleton and his staff were already there in formal array, Middleton sitting on a chair facing west. The Indians sat on the ground a distance from him. Poundmaker, spokesman and commander of the host even if in defeat, rose and came forward, his hand outstretched in greeting. Middleton waved it aside, 'I do not shake hands with rebels.' The leaders were taken into custody, the great mass of Indians were ordered back to their reserves.

When Charles Bremner went to his tent, he was challenged by a policeman coming out of it, holding a rifle in his hands and demanding to know where he got it. Bought it from a neighbour. And where did he get it? Probably from an Indian. The rifle had belonged to a dead policeman, and Charles Bremner was taken into custody.

As soon as he was seen being taken into barracks by the police, soldiers and others began drifting by his tent and helping themselves to skins from the heavily laden carts. Louis Caplette tried to stop them, but they laughed at him: Bremner was a rebel, the furs were fair game. Caplette appealed to Middleton, who ordered them to be taken into barracks for safe keeping.

Many of the Bresaylor captives were taken into custody, but most were released. Five were held — the five who had stood on a promontory at Cut Knife waving a white flag. On 1 June, they were charged with treason felony. They waited for a month for word from Middleton — who was off on an unsuccessful attempt to catch up with Big Bear — as to what would be done with them. It was not until Friday, 3 July, that the *Herald* reported that Colonel Herchmer had gone south, taking prisoners arrested by order of General Middleton. They included Poundmaker and the Bresaylor five. They arrived in Regina, on 10 July. It was a long, hot summer.

Riel's trial was over 1 August, and the appeals began. A couple of weeks later Poundmaker (he had never met Riel until they met in the Regina prison) was

sentenced to three years in the penitentiary. At last, after so many weeks of waiting, the Bresaylor men were called on 7 September. The Clerk of the Court read the charge of 'The Queen vs. Charles Bremner et al.' that they at Cut Knife on 2 May 'and on divers other days and times before and after did conspire, consult, confederate, assemble and meet together with divers other evil-disposed persons . . . to raise, make and levy insurrection and rebellion against our said Lady the Queen.' The prisoners pleaded not guilty.

When the Crown Prosecutor, Britton B. Osler, Q.C., from Ontario, addressed the judge, he seemed friendly and sympathetic. The Crown had considered that 'perhaps the prisoners were in a difficult position' in Poundmaker's camp, that they were there 'probably without their consent', and that they had their families to protect. 'The Crown considering these things, and not being able to bring home acts of personal violence against any of them, and learning that they were all men of good character before this trouble came, we have considered that perhaps the ends of justice would be obtained by allowing them to be discharged on their own recognizance to appear when called upon for trial,' and that, 'only in the event of evidence turning up to show that they were personally implicated in acts of violence during the rebellion.'

And that was it. The Crown, after searching for the two months that these men had been in the Regina

jail, had found no evidence against them. 'We were released on bail on our own security of \$400,' Bremner said. They were released, but they were not cleared. In Scottish law they would have been under the gray cloud of 'Not Proven' but they had not even that protection. They could be called up again and again if anyone thought he could safely charge them with 'an act of violence', even as they had been called up in the first place. The smear of 'rebel' remained, and it was to harm not only Bremner and the men arrested with him, but all of the fifteen families who had been forced into Poundmaker's camp.

There was another blow to come to Charles Bremner, but to him alone. When he returned to Battleford, he was stunned to discover that his furs were gone. They had been confiscated by General Middleton. The Indians had demolished his house and store and all their contents, they had eaten his cattle and driven off his horses; now the other force in that conflict had taken his good name and his family's livelihood. He had nothing left.

With the advice and help of James Clinkskill, a Battleford merchant whom he had dealt with, Bremner began the long struggle to win back what was his own. Winnipeg was the first objective, for there was an interesting congregation of personalities there at the time, including the Minister of Militia, Adolphe Caron; the Minister of the Interior, Thomas White; and —

*Poundmaker, defeated, rides into Battleford with his people, May, 1885. From a painting by R. Lindemere.*



the prize quarry — General Middleton. Accompanied by his son-in-law and store clerk, Louis Caplette, Bremner arrived in Winnipeg on 5 November.

They went first to the *Manitoba Free Press* to publicize the 'cruel wrong' done by the Dominion Government. The cruel wrong was not the loss of the furs, but the denial of a trial to clear their names and those of their neighbours. On the following day, the paper ran the story of captivity and imprisonment under the headlines 'Four Months in Jail. Cruel Treatment of a Scotch Half-breed. How a Loyal Man Was Kept in Prison and Denied the Privilege of a Trial.'

Bremner and Caplette next went to H.M. Howell, Q.C., the lawyer whom Clinkskill had recommended. Howell took them first to Caron, who disclaimed any responsibility by the army. This was a personal matter concerning General Middleton alone; he was the one to see. Howell made an appointment with Middleton for the following Monday, and advised Bremner to draw up as complete a list as possible of the missing furs. While the rest of Canada was celebrating the driving of 'The Last Spike' uniting the country, Bremner and Caplette made out the list: beaver, lynx, fisher, red fox, mink, wolves, bears, ranging in value from 3 silver fox at \$50 each to 233 skunks at 75¢ each, and totalling over \$4,500. On Monday morning, armed with the list, Howell took them to Middleton.

Middleton was at his highest point, his moment of triumph. He and Caron had just been knighted for their successful resolution of the rebellion. To his three visitors, Middleton denied all knowledge of any part of their account, either of Bremner or of the furs. He had had no such furs, had never received them, had never given orders for their confiscation, had never authorized them to be given to others. He also denied having recently sent telegrams to Captain Morris about more furs. Moreover, he did not remember ever having seen Caplette before, let alone sending the furs into the barracks at his request. He had not ordered the arrest of Bremner nor of his companions. And the meeting was over. General Sir Frederick Middleton left that day.

There remained Thomas White, Minister of the Interior. White said that he would be willing to pass on their problem to the Commission on Settlers' Rebellion Losses, but that he could do no more than that. He advised them in the meantime, to make a sworn affidavit as to their list. And so the last call of the day was to James Fisher, authorized to take affidavits.

To Charles Bremner's affidavit, Louis Caplette added his: that he had been in charge of the furs and knew the contents of the carts, that soldiers had started pilaging them, that he had gone 'to the military authorities to ask for protection' and that they 'took possession of the furs and placed them in the barracks.' The oath taken, and Charles Bremner having signed

Public Archives of Canada



John A. Macdonald and subsequent Conservative prime ministers were not inclined to satisfy Bremner's claim. Not until 1899 did a Liberal government authorize compensation.

as a mark-man, Howell said he would see that the document got to White and to the Rebellion Losses Commission. That was all that could be done now. They returned to Battleford.

In the little world of Bresaylor, division deepened during 1886 when the Rebellion Losses Commission allowed the claims (if reduced) of all those who had taken shelter in the barracks, and refused the claims of all those who had not. It was a friendless year.

Then came random disaster. On 8 November, an explosion destroyed the Bremner house, the probable cause being a spark from the kitchen stove dropping through a crack in the floor to a keg of gunpowder stored in the cellar. Mrs Bremner and her infant daughter were badly cut and burned. The kitchen was blown to pieces, the rest of the house wrecked even worse than it had been by vandals the year before. The tin cash box where Bremner had put the bit of money he had saved was gone. 'Last time I opened it, I just stuffed some bills in; the ends were sticking out. Here are the ends, as if they'd been cut off by scissors. I had about \$200 saved up there.'

Yet the disaster had some strange effects. Lingering hostility disappeared as Bresaylor people rallied to their own. Battleford merchants gave Bremner freighting and other work towards his livelihood, and even Laurie

— who had given a vivid account of the explosion — re-instated him in the newspaper as 'Mr. Bremner'. In the weeks leading up to the federal election of 22 February 1887, Bremner and his Cut Knife companions became a small 'cause', and in the new Parliament on 31 May, the Honourable David Mills, Liberal, brought up the question of Bremner's furs, confiscated by General Middleton. For the next three years, because of Liberal pressure, pressure from the territorial government and petitions from Battleford residents, Bresaylor loyalty and Bremner's furs made fitful appearances in Parliament.

On 3 March 1890, there came a full-fledged motion by James Lister, Liberal of Lambton West, and the motion (amended) was passed with the support not only of Liberals, but also of Tories who had been members of the militia and who were distressed at the reflection on the reputation of the army. The motion read, 'That a Select Committee be appointed to enquire into statements made in this House in reference to the furs said to have been taken from Charles Bremner, a Half-breed, resident in Battleford.' Three days later, Sir John A. Macdonald submitted names from both parties for a committee of seven. The Select Committee was constituted by vote on 10 March. After five years, Charles Bremner had won a victory.

At the first meeting, the Committee called General Middleton and Hayter Reed, Assistant Indian Commissioner and a temporary member of Middleton's staff, and Ronald Macdonald, quarter-master of the Home Guard, who had laid out the furs when they were brought into barracks. The General and Reed were represented by lawyers, and Middleton's lawyer denied all charges. With some difficulty the Committee established that the furs had been 'taken from this man Bremner, believed to be a rebel, and that the General had ordered their confiscation. Hayter Reed added that in the letter of authorization, dictated to him at Fort Pitt, the General had ordered furs to be put up for himself and his staff. Ronald Macdonald said that the letter ordered two bales of the best to be put up for Middleton, one for Reed and one for Bedson (another temporary member of Middleton's staff), and that he had supervised the packing. The next day he discovered that two saddle boxes of furs, addressed to General Middleton, had been added, the whole making up about half of Bremner's furs, and that thereafter more furs were given out on orders from commanding officers.

At the next meeting, on 1 April, Middleton, with an air of the bluff, candid old soldier, began with a written statement. This time he recalled that it was about the time that he ordered the confiscation that 'I ordered the Half-breeds to be sent to Regina', though, as he admitted, without any proof that they were rebels.



*Major-General Sir Frederick D. Middleton in his moment of victory.*

Lister took up the questioning. 'You give the Committee to understand that at the time you gave those directions, you believed you had the right to confiscate the furs — that is, to appropriate them to your own use?'

'Yes. I thought I was the ruling power up there, owing to the state of the country, owing to the state of war, that I could do pretty much as I liked, as long as it was within reason.'

Middleton continued to deny that he had seen either Bremner or Caplette in Battleford, and further denied that he had seen them in Winnipeg. It was fortunate for Bremner that he had had a lawyer with him in Winnipeg.

Hayter Reed had his own little surprise in his statement that he had returned his bundle of furs some months later because 'the question was asked about the propriety of the confiscations.' He returned them at about the time that the *Free Press* published Bremner's story.

Having got all that the General was likely to concede, the Committee concentrated at their next meeting on Bremner's claims and sworn statements before the Claims Commission, and Father Cochin's testimony on behalf of the Bresaylor group. The final meeting, on Wednesday, 23 April, was concerned with the value of the furs and compensation for them. When Lister announced, 'I, for Bremner, state to the Committee

that Bremner will accept \$4,500 in full for his claim for furs', the inquiry was over. All that remained for the Committee was to submit the report to the House.

The report was made on 12 May, the anniversary of the fall of Batoche five years earlier. From that day on, the affairs of Charles Bremner had the distinction of becoming an item in *Hansard*, 'The Bremner Furs.'

Alexander McNeill, chairman of the Select Committee, moved the adoption of the report. The central point was, 'Your Committee consider the confiscation of the furs unwarrantable and illegal, and in his evidence General Middleton admits that he has recently become satisfied it was not legally justifiable. Your Committee further are of the opinion that, if the confiscation had been legal, the confiscated property vested in the Crown; and while your Committee believe that General Middleton acted under an unfortunate misconception as to his powers, they are of opinion that the appropriation of any part of the property under such circumstances, by General Middleton to his own use, and to that of the members of his staff, was highly improper.'

The debate began, with member after member calling for the removal of Middleton as commander of the militia. Caron, his superior, tried to restore some stature to him: 'I consider the action of General Middleton is the result of a most unfortunate error of judgement. . . . I think it is only right and proper that we should consider the extenuating circumstances that can be brought forward.'

Lister countered, 'For five years Bremner has been pressing for the payment of his claim . . . he is now broken in health and living in poverty, and the Minister of Militia asks this House and the country to excuse General Middleton. . . . So far as General Middleton is concerned, his usefulness to this country is gone.'

Sir John A. rose, 'I would be charitable enough to believe that the confiscation of the goods was an error of judgement; but as to the appropriation of the goods, it seems to me, that was not an error of judgement. That was an illegal and improper act, and it cannot be defended. Upon these grounds, I think that the report ought to be unanimously adopted by this House.'

And so it was. Charles Bremner was upheld by the highest tribunal in the land, and in Bresaylor there was great rejoicing.

But the days passed, the weeks passed, the months passed, and Charles Bremner got no money. There had been an unfortunate oversight. No stipulation had been made as to how, or when, or by whom payment would be made. Middleton, who resigned in July and left for England in August, declared from London in December that he would not pay a penny towards compensation for the furs. Caron looked grave and said the government did not hold itself responsible. In June of 1891, Sir John A. Macdonald died, and the whole

house was in disarray, with dissension on both sides. There followed a series of brief prime-ministerships: Abbott, Thompson, Bowell, and then Tupper for 69 days in 1896. None had desire nor plans to compensate Bremner.

In the election of the summer of 1896, the Liberals won and Wilfrid Laurier was prime minister. One of Bremner's Liberal champions, returning from victory celebrations in Ottawa, declared triumphantly, 'The Bremner fur claims are to be paid in full!' But it was not until the following May that Thomas Davis, the new member for Saskatchewan, rose to make his plea for Charles Bremner. He was supported by Lister who added that Bremner had been 'afflicted; he is now paralysed.' Nothing happened. No money was appropriated in the supplementary estimates for 1897.

Charles Bremner was now 58, partially disabled by a stroke, and no longer able to do the heavy work of freighting. In Bresaylor he was frustrated and an embarrassment to those who had tried to help him. But in the world outside, the gold rush was on and the Peace River country was opening up. Edmonton had become the supply base for both gold-seekers and settlers. The trail north was busy. For a final time, the Bremners set out with wagon, goods, and animals to start anew. They finished their journey a day's driving north of Edmonton, and there they set up a stopping-house for travellers. Once more they were on their feet and a part of the ebb and flow of life.

In the spring of 1899, word came of another discussion in Parliament of the Bremner fur case. But no cheque was issued. Finally, on 9 August, an item came before the House in Committee of Supply: 'Amount required to pay Mr. Charles Bremner of Bresaylor for value of furs entrusted by him to Dominion Government authorities at Battleford on the 26th May, 1885, and never returned to him — \$5,364.50'. This time an entry appeared in the Auditor-General's report for 1899-1900: 'Miscellaneous: Charles Bremner Value of Furs Lost in 1885 . . . \$5,364.50.'

In September, the *Saskatchewan Herald* noted that Charles Bremner had been paid for his furs and had invited his daughter and son-in-law, the Louis Caplettes, to leave Bresaylor and join him, where he would establish them on a farm.

The year 1900: a new life, in a new land, and the beginning of a new century. That New Year's Day, Charles Bremner celebrated as the patriarch, the provider, surrounded by children and grandchildren. After fifteen years, he had won back what was his own. The money had helped to bring the family together and to give them a firm base. The other world — of rebellion, of Poundmaker, of Middleton — it belonged to travellers' tales. It had passed away.

In spite of his hard life, Charles Bremner lived to be eighty. He died on 16 May 1919. ♦

*Arthur Robertson, Secretary to Chief Trade Commissioner Joseph Wrigley of the Hudson's Bay Company in Winnipeg, continues his account of Wrigley's inspection tour of fur-trade posts in the Northwest. From Fort Dunvegan they go north by the Peace, Great Slave and Mackenzie rivers to Peel River.*

*Robertson's journal of the tour is published in three parts by permission of his daughter, Mrs J. S. Hargrave of Vancouver.*

## *Journey to the Far North, Summer 1887*

### PART II

SUNDAY — 12th June, 1887

At two o'clock on Saturday afternoon we embarked on board a couple of dug-out canoes lashed together for stability, and with three Indians to paddle we started downstream to make the return journey. The country immediately on the north bank of the river is very fine and its scenery is seen to better advantage from the river than by the route which we came up. The bank rises at intervals to a considerable height, forming large green grassy knolls which stretch inland for some distance. Clumps of poplar and bunches of huge willows, with flowers of many hues, give variety to the scene and at every pause in the rise there is a gentle slope, velvety and lawn-like in appearance. The whole country, from Dunvegan to the Crossing, is rich in verdure and undoubtedly it is fertile, but the tract is not very extensive and early frosts render the growing of grain crops precarious.

The river was running like a mill-race and in seven and a half hours we accomplished what had taken over a day to do by land; the distances in both cases being about the same. Our men had arrived at the Crossing in good time the previous day and the boat for our journey down the river was all ready. Getting everything on board, we left at half past eleven o'clock last night (Saturday) and drifted with the current; a man remaining at the stern sweep to keep the boat in the centre of the stream. We have floated a considerable distance during the night and if everything goes well, expect to reach Fort Vermilion tomorrow evening. Our boat is flat-bottomed and is rather smaller than the York boat. Twice during the day the keen-eyed steersman has spied a bear among the trees on the high banks of the river, but our unskilled eyes failed to discover the animals. About midday, Battle River Post was passed but as it is only kept open during the winter, we did not land.

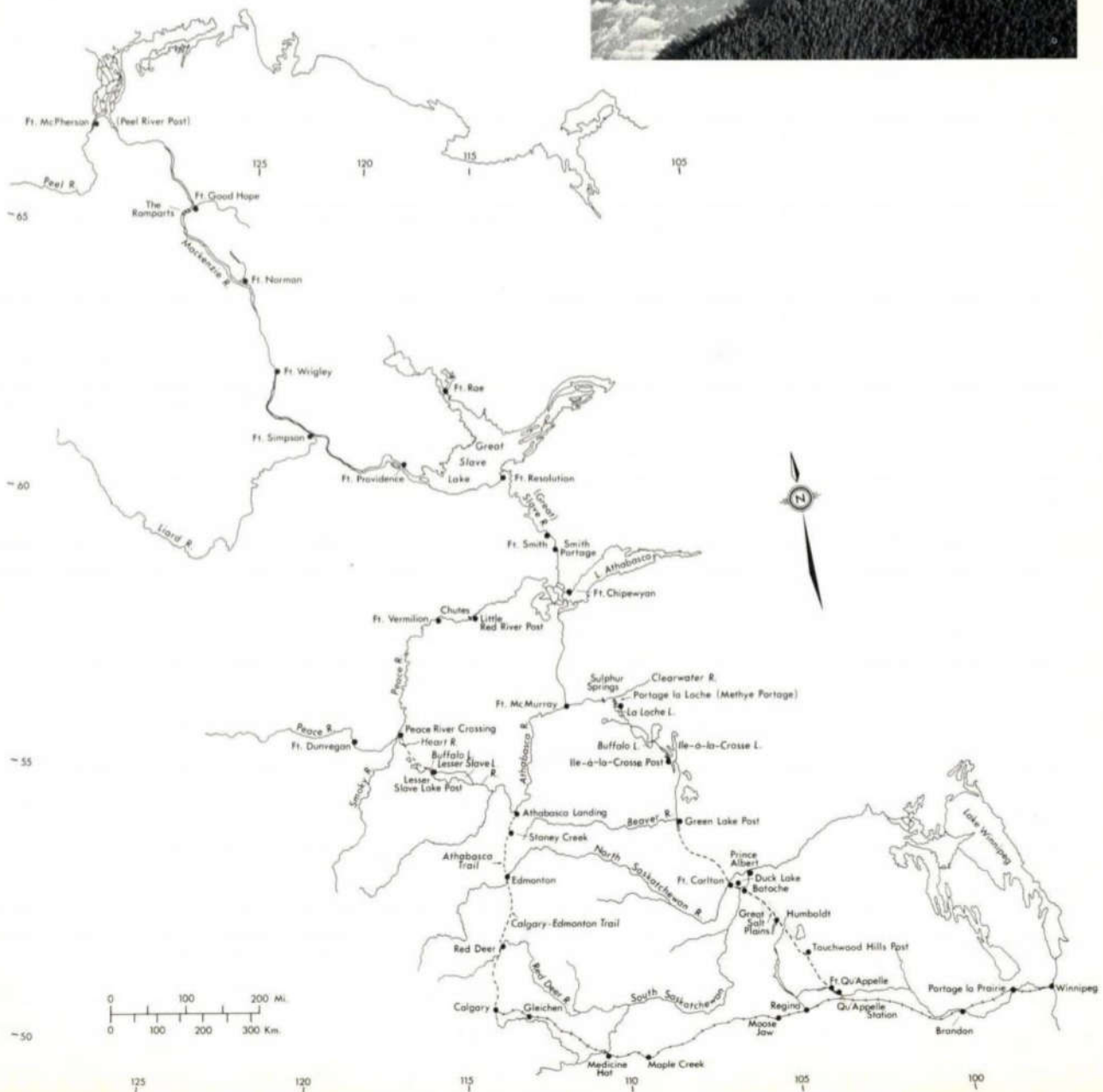
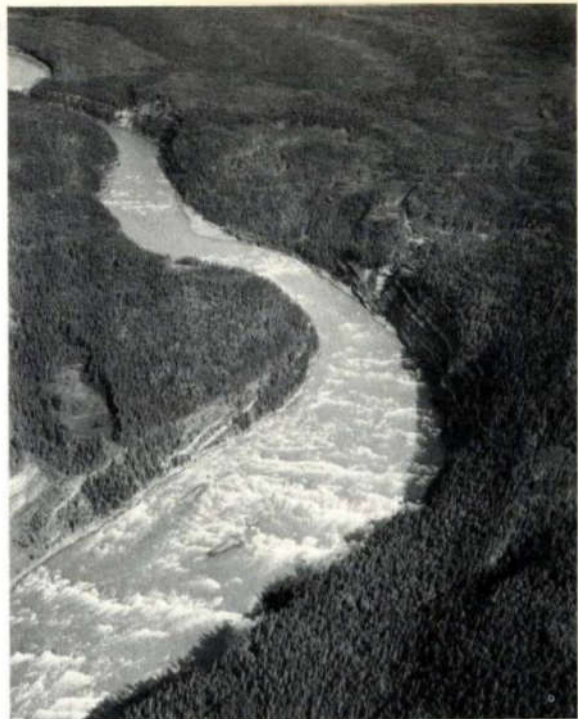
MONDAY — 13th June

We continued to drift with the stream all last night and since four o'clock this morning the men have been at the oars. It is impossible to say exactly what distance we have come as the boatmen are ignorant of distances by miles, but they can tell how many bends or points in the river we have yet to pass, or how many days it takes to do the balance of the journey by dog-train in winter. With the latter information, we can arrive at a rough estimate of how far we have yet to go and we hope to reach Vermilion late tonight. The scenery now is not so fine and as we pass the steep wooded banks, hour after hour, without seeing any signs of life, it is even apt to become monotonous. The weather both yesterday and today has been lovely, but the heat is oppressive and sitting in the open boat, we feel the full strength of the sun, the small awning affording but little protection. The surface of the water is like a mirror and bend after bend in the river is passed as the rapid current whirls us along. The river is strewn with large quantities of driftwood, among which there are many fine spars which would be of considerable value in a timber yard, but here they are valueless; and hurried along by many waters, they ultimately will find their way to the Arctic Ocean, if not ground to matchwood in the numerous rapids through which they must pass.

During the afternoon the cry of 'Musqua' (Cree for Bear) from the ever watchful steersman, put us into a state of excitement. At first we could not discern the animals and the boatmen pointed, jabbered and gesticulated, but all to no purpose. On the boat being quietly rowed nearer the shore we observed two large black bears standing at the foot of a tree on the bank, about three hundred yards away. The Commissioner would not hear of our going on shore on account of the delay it would entail, and there was nothing for it but to guess at the range and try a shot from where we were. I fired but the animals scuttled away among

the bushes apparently unharmed. It was difficult to arrive at the range looking from the water up the steep bank, as such distances are very deceptive to the eye. Being to leeward, no hunter would have thought of shooting from the boat when, by landing, the bears could have been approached owing to the natural ambush to within a few yards. I was disappointed at not getting on shore and within closer range, but it could not be helped, and Billy, our cook, who is somewhat of a wag, endeavoured to offer consolation by remarking that, if we did not hit the bears we had at least 'scared them awfully'.

By midnight Fort Vermilion was about four miles distant and as it was considered too late to disturb the people at the fort, we brought up for the night alongside the bank.





*In 1887 the Council of the Hudson's Bay Company met at Winnipeg. Several of the officers from the Northwest who travelled with the Commissioner on parts of his journey were present, and were photographed in front of the old Upper Fort Garry gate.*

**Row 1**, at the bottom: Captain W. H. Adams (Factor), Horace Belanger (Chief Factor). **Row 2**: Joseph Fortescue (Chief Factor), Alexander Munro (Chief Factor), Thomas Smith (Assistant Commissioner), Commissioner Joseph Wrigley, Richard Hardisty (Chief Factor), Lawrence Clarke (Chief Factor), Roderick McFarlane (Chief Factor). **Row 3**: Archibald McDonald (Chief Factor), Arthur Robertson (Secretary to the Commissioner, and author of this account), James McDougall (Chief Factor) who took many of the photographs used as illustrations, Wm Clark (Chief Factor), Colin Rankin (Chief Factor), Dr W. M. MacKay (Chief Trader), Peter W. Bell (Chief Factor), Murdoch Matheson (Jr Chief Trader), Dr Lynch, E.K. Beeston (Jr Chief Trader), M.S. Beeston, Samuel K. Parson (Chief Factor). **Row 4**: James H. Lawson (Factor), W. J. McLean (Chief Trader), Cuthbert Sinclair (Jr Chief Trader), A.R. Lillie (Executive Chief Trader), James L. Cotter (Chief Trader). **Row 5**: Alex Matheson (Factor).

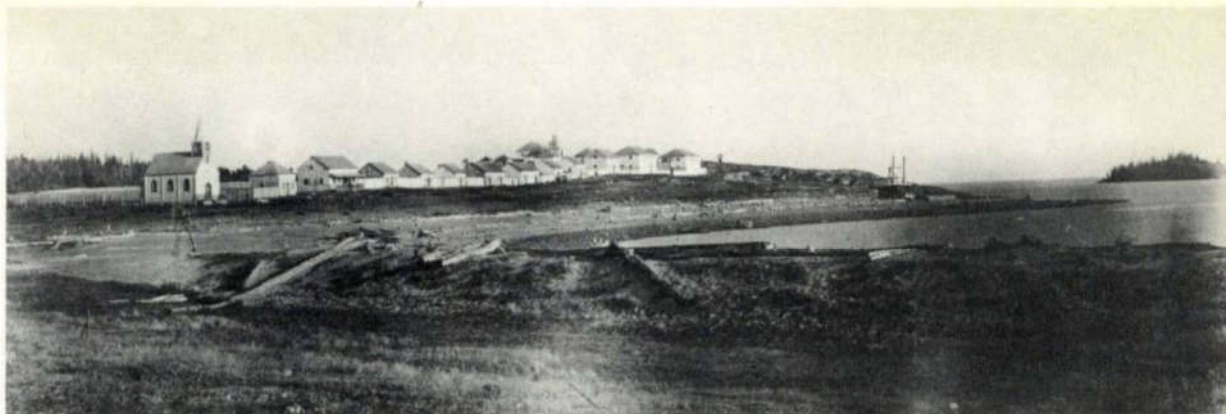
## TUESDAY — 14th June

Early this morning we landed at Vermilion where we found [Chief] Factor James McDougall, the officer in charge of Athabasca District, awaiting us. He had left the Steamer *Grahame* at the 'Chutes', 43 miles further down the river. Vermilion Post is in the Athabasca District and Mr. McDougall has now assumed charge of our party as it is his duty to provide for our safe conduct through his district. At seven o'clock this evening we left Vermilion in the same boat and expect to reach the 'Chutes' or Falls of the Peace River early to-morrow morning. The heat to-day has again been intense.

## WEDNESDAY — 15th June

At an early hour the roar of the falls warned us that we were approaching the 'Chutes'. There are two falls about a mile apart. When about three hundred yards from the first one, four men went on shore with a

strong tracking line and lowered the boat down gradually, keeping her as close to the shore as possible to avoid the force of the current. About fifty yards above the fall, the boat was hauled into an eddy where most of the cargo was discharged and portaged to a landing place some distance below. Boats are generally allowed to drop down this rapid by means of a line, the crew remaining on the shore; but one of the Athabasca men that Mr. McDougall had brought with him, an expert at shooting rapids, volunteered to run the boat provided the passengers did not come. Having securely lashed the stern sweep to his satisfaction, placed a good man in the bow with a strong pole, and assigned to the rest of the crew their respective positions, he pushed off into the rushing waters. We watched the proceedings with breathless interest. Like a cork, the light boat spun out into the seething mass and was whirled along at a tremendous pace. For a moment or two not a word was uttered and the steersman seemed to feel the



Fort Chipewyan, 1891-92. From the collection of Chief Factor James McDougall, officer in charge of the Athabasca District until his appointment as acting inspector for the Company in 1890.

responsibility that rested upon him as a false move of the sweep might jeopardize the life of himself and crew. But it was not the first time he had undertaken a similar responsibility and as the boat bounded over the cascade, the men gave a shout and with a twist of the oar she was shot into an eddy below. With the exception of a slight wetting the crew were nothing the worse of their adventurous passage. Having congratulated the steersman on his successful feat, the baggage was put on board again and as before, the boat was lowered down to within a few yards of the next fall by a line from the shore. At this fall there is a clear drop of fully twelve feet of an immense volume of water, the water above and below boiling like a cauldron. It was not considered safe to shoot this so the supplies had again to be portaged and the boat was allowed to go over, guided by several lines from the shore. The river here is from three-quarters of a mile to a mile in breadth, but this is much wider than it is above. The Peace River has twice the volume of water of the Athabasca and Saskatchewan rivers put together and from the 'Chutes' to Hudson's Hope, 550 miles above, there is uninterrupted navigation for a steamer of considerable draught of water. It is not at all improbable that a steamboat may be running on the upper part of this river at no very remote period. The question of the possibility of constructing a lock at the 'Chutes', which would permit the Athabasca steamer to ascend without hindrance, may yet receive consideration.

The boat being reloaded, we proceeded four miles further and reached, about midday, the post of Little Red River where the Steamer *Grahame* awaited us. Here Mr. McKenzie, the officer in charge, had a revolting tale of cannibalism to tell us caused through the scarcity of country provisions last winter. It appears there was a band of Cree Indians consisting of thirty-two, at some distance from the fort. Two children and an old man died first and the rest of the band, to

prolong their own lives, ate the bodies. After that, they found a small quantity of provisions but it was soon exhausted and they were again in a starving condition. They then began to kill each other, till at last there were only two men and two girls surviving. The men ran away in the woods to avert their own fate and one of the girls remaining killed her sister and ate her up and then managed to reach the Company's post. At the fort Mr. McKenzie had been sharing his stock of provisions with a number of starving Indians nearly all the winter and by the time he was relieved, he had given away every article of food that he possessed. Such a total failure of country provisions as occurred last winter was never before known and the dreadful straits in which the natives were placed are almost unparalleled in the history of the country.

We left Little Red River in the afternoon on board the *Grahame* and continued to run until ten o'clock when anchor was cast for the night. The weather still remains fine.

#### THURSDAY — 16th June

Making an early start this morning and having a good run all day, we reached Fort Chipewyan about eight o'clock this evening. From the Chutes to Chipewyan the banks of the river are low lying and destitute of any particular feature worth noting. The *Grahame*, so named after the late Commissioner, is a light-draught, three-decked, stern-wheel steamer of the same description as the boats which run on the Mississippi. When new she only drew 14 inches of water when light but as her hull has got soaked with water, she now draws about 18 inches. She carries fully 200 tons. The staterooms and saloon are large and commodious; in fact, too much so for the requirements of the trade.

#### SUNDAY — 19th June

Fort Chipewyan is situated on a rocky promontory at the west end of Lake Athabasca on the north side of the lake. It is in about the same latitude as the north

of Scotland. The officer who was in charge when the present fort was erected seems to have had a good deal of consideration for effect as, on approaching it in the steamboat, it looks quite imposing and has all the appearance of a little village. The establishment is a very large one and the buildings, as at nearly all Hudson's Bay Company's posts in the interior, are painted white. It is the head post of the Athabasca District which accounts to some extent for the number of buildings. The Company has been established here for more than 100 years.

The surrounding country is flat and rocky, with scarcely any fertile soil, but pines grow abundantly and the numerous islands throughout the lake are covered with these hardy trees. Around the fort there is a considerable patch of land under cultivation which produces vegetables and some kinds of cereals. Lake

Athabasca is about 225 miles in length and is a large body of water.

During our stay at the fort the weather has been pleasant, though warm. I bathed repeatedly in the lake, along with one of the clerks, and enjoyed the swim immensely. The water was not at all cold but the mosquitoes and flies, which are every day becoming more troublesome, interfered slightly with this luxury.

Both Protestant and Roman Catholic missions are established at Chipewyan, but the native population are nearly all Catholics. Archdeacon Reeve, the English Church clergyman, is absent at present, having gone to attend the Synod at Winnipeg. There was, therefore, no service in the church today. We remained all Friday and Saturday at the fort and this evening, about half past eight o'clock, the *Grahame* came alongside the wharf below the fort and half an hour

J. McDougall, HBC Collection



*The Company's stern-wheel steamer 'Grahame' delivering cargo at Smith Landing (present-day Fitzgerald), June 1892.*

J. McDougall, HBC Collection



*Carts returning across the portage from Smith Post to the Landing.*

afterwards we got under weigh. Steering a course among the many islands, Great Slave River was soon entered and as darkness was approaching, the boat was moored to the bank for the night.

MONDAY — 20th June

The south end of Smith Portage was reached this forenoon at 11 o'clock and we were disappointed to find that there was no one awaiting us with means for our conveyance to the other end of the portage. A messenger was immediately dispatched to the officer in charge of Fort Smith 18 miles distant, to inform him of our arrival and at six in the evening Mr. Scott Simpson appeared, followed shortly by saddled horses and ox-carts. From Mr. Simpson we learned that the Mackenzie River steamer had not yet arrived and that being the case, we determined to stay where we were all night. This place is the most northerly point to which the Steamer *Grahame* can ply as the river is

here broken by a succession of rapids, cascades and falls which extend for a distance of 18 miles. It is our intention to go down to Fort Smith by the river tomorrow if canoes and experienced boatmen can be secured.

#### TUESDAY — 21st June

Queen's Jubilee, but had no time to celebrate. The carts, with our baggage, were sent off early in the forenoon and about midday, Mr. Scott Simpson and the Commissioner, and the Commissioner's son, and myself, started off in two birch-bark canoes to run the rapids, whilst the others proceeded to cross the portage on horseback. Each canoe was manned by a couple of swarthy savages whose skill was undoubted. The experience to us was novel and exciting as rapid after rapid was dexterously run. Four portages had to be made on account of large falls in the river, the canoes and what little baggage we had with us being carried over by the men. For the last few days the mosquitoes have been giving us some little trouble, but today they passed all bounds of moderation and compelled us to put over our heads the nets with which we had come provided. Gloves were also necessary and even protected as we were, the 'varmints' still managed to get up our coat sleeves, or wherever an opening offered, causing us much annoyance. The scenery coming down the rapids is very fine, but the insect pests interfered considerably with our peace of both body and mind and prevented us thoroughly appreciating the beauties of nature. What with portages and other delays, it took us seven hours to reach Fort Smith. This point is the head of navigation for the Mackenzie River steamer and it was here that the boat was built. As yet there is no word of the steamer and if she does not arrive tomorrow, we intend proceeding down the river with an open boat as far as Fort Resolution where we are likely to meet her. We anticipate that she is prevented from crossing Great Slave Lake by the ice which sometimes does not move until the end of the month.

#### WEDNESDAY — 22nd June

The steamer not having arrived, we got our baggage and supplies on board a boat which had hurriedly been made sea-worthy for us and at half past two o'clock in the afternoon, left Fort Smith downstream with a fair wind. After running about thirty miles under sail, a thunder storm accompanied by a strong gale of wind compelled us to put on shore for shelter. At ten in the evening the gale moderated and we put off into the river again to drift with the current all night. The mosquitoes have been dreadful all day and every day's experience is worse than the preceding. They are so bad tonight that sleep is out of the question, but the boatmen more accustomed to the tormentors try to snatch a few winks under their blankets. I took refuge by the cook-stove in the bow of the boat and endea-

voured to keep up a smoke to drive the pests away. There is little or no darkness tonight in this northern latitude.

Shortly after midnight a faint, whitish smoke was observed in the distance and a few minutes later the *Wrigley* hove in sight, steaming along at a rattling pace. Firing a volley with our guns to inform them of our presence she showed up and in five minutes we were on board and right glad too, to get rid of the old boat in which we had spent such a miserable time. As anticipated, we learned that the steamer had been detained by the ice in the lake. It was our intention that the *Wrigley* should proceed with us immediately to Fort Simpson, but as there were some missionaries with their families on board going to Fort Smith, it was decided to return as it would only take about five hours and the stock of fuel which was becoming exhausted could also be replenished there, as a quantity of cordwood had been cut for that purpose.

#### THURSDAY — 23rd June

We returned to Fort Smith at seven in the morning and lay there until four o'clock in the afternoon, taking on board fuel and a quantity of provisions for Mackenzie River District where the people, we learn, have all been in a state approaching starvation during the past winter.

The *Wrigley*, so named after the present Commissioner, is a screw steamer, a much smaller boat than the *Grahame* and of a different model, being adapted either for the river or lake. She is driven by a single cylinder engine and can make her ten knots an hour in still water. Like nearly all the river and lake boats in this country, she is painted white. Captain Smith, a bluff, good-hearted salt (a fresh water one) who built the steamer, is running the boat on this trip and Chief Factor Camsell, the officer in charge of Mackenzie River District, is on board and will accompany us through his district. Mr. McDougall, we left behind on the *Grahame* but the Doctor [Dr. W.M. MacKay] is still one of our party. The *Wrigley's* accommodation for passengers is very limited, indeed, and the Doctor and I have to content ourselves with a small stateroom between us containing a couple of berths.

Towards the evening the weather changed for the worse and a thunder storm similar to that of last night again burst forth. A strong head wind also sprang up and continued most of the night. Had we remained in the open boat, we could not have made any progress, but would have had to seek shelter under the lee of some island in the river.

#### FRIDAY — 24th June

Notwithstanding the adverse weather, a good run has been made and by eleven o'clock in the forenoon we left Great Slave River and entered Great Slave



*The dwelling house at Fort Simpson, head post of the Mackenzie River District. The garden here provided a 'very fine lettuce salad'.*

HBC Collection



*Chief Factor Julian Camsell, who lived at Fort Simpson with his family from 1882-1900.*

HBC Collection



*Mrs J. S. Camsell and her children. One son, Charles, became deputy minister of the federal department of Mines and Resources and Commissioner of the Northwest Territories.*

Lake. Fort Resolution is situated on the lake about four miles from the mouth of the river, but we did not stop at the post as it is to be visited on our return. It was thought that some trouble might be caused by the ice in crossing the lake, but by changing our course a clear passage was found, although large fields of ice were seen on either side. The weather during the latter part of the day has been fine, but a perceptible chill was felt when crossing the lake among the ice.

At ten o'clock in the evening we entered the majestic Mackenzie. Under what altered conditions the journey is now being made compared to what has been the case in the past! Just 99 years ago the intrepid explorer from whom the river takes its name followed the course of the river to its mouth in a canoe. After the establishment of posts by the Hudson's Bay Company, York boats have been the means by which the demands of the trade have been supplied year by year until now, for the first time, they are superseded by steam. The country at the entrance to the river is low lying and covered with brushwood.

#### SATURDAY — 25th June

We touched at Fort Providence early this morning but most of us remained in our berths as we intend spending a few hours at this post on our return. Fort Simpson was reached at six in the evening, having made the run from Fort Smith, a distance of about 500 miles, in 50 hours which includes several hours stoppages employed in obtaining fuel at different places on the route. Rain has fallen all day and there are now signs of a change in the weather. We have been fortunate in having such good weather while travelling in the open boats. Now the rain does not cause us much inconvenience. I have been on shore for a look but I propose staying on board for the night; the others, however, are putting up at the fort. The steamer is anchored in the stream a few yards from the fort.

#### SUNDAY — 26th June

Another day of rain which apparently prevented my getting on shore to service in the morning. Bishop



*The steamer 'Wrigley', takes aboard a moose which was shot from the deck, c1904.*

Bompas, the Bishop of the Diocese of Mackenzie River, officiated; his Lordship ringing the bell for service and performing all other such like duties himself.

The weather being a little more settled in the afternoon I went on shore and had dinner with the others at the Company's mess. In the garden at the fort vegetables of different kinds were coming on well and we had some very fine lettuce salad, which was a treat much appreciated.

Fort Simpson is the head post of the Mackenzie River District and it is situated on an island in the river immediately below where the Liard flows into the Mackenzie. The buildings are large and the dwelling houses appear the most comfortable looking that we have visited in the inland districts. In the clerks' quarters there are a couple of billiard tables which must greatly help to while away the spare hours of those who live at this remote place. There is also a very fair collection of books in the library.

In the evening the weather having cleared up a little, steam was got up and at seven o'clock, we were again proceeding downstream.

MONDAY — 27th June

Having retired early last night I was astir by four o'clock this morning. About half past four we stopped at Fort Wrigley for a few minutes to land the mail packet and some supplies. This post has formerly been an outpost of Fort Simpson but it has lately been named after the Commissioner, although we were not aware

of this until now. It is just the usual Hudson's Bay post and any further description is unnecessary.

Fort Norman was reached at five o'clock in the afternoon and a couple of hours were spent on shore. Here we got a supply of fresh moose meat which was an agreeable addition to our larder of preserved provisions. The flesh of the moose is tender and possessed of a richer flavour than that of the deer and the roasts and stews prepared by our chef were much enjoyed.

The scenery since leaving Fort Simpson has become more attractive and calls for remark. The course of the river is now skirted on the west side by high mountain ranges on whose summits lie perpetual snows. The banks of the river are steep and are heavily timbered with pine, poplar and birch. In many places along the foot of the high banks there are immense boulders of ice which have been deposited there when the river opened in the spring. At first we could hardly believe it was really ice we saw as, being covered with dust, it looked like massive pieces of rock, many tons in weight, but on landing at the fort we set at rest any doubts. The mosquitoes still cause us no little annoyance. When steaming out in the river we are comparatively free from their persecution, but on going near the banks to take on board fuel, or on landing at the forts, they invade us in myriads. Sometimes they are so troublesome that I am forced to 'seek the seclusion that my cabin grants' and there in my berth under the mosquito screen I heroically defy the enemy.

The Roman Catholic church built by Oblate missionaries Father Petitot and Brother Ancel, at Fort Good Hope.



R. S. Alkens

Hudson's Bay Company buildings at Fort Good Hope, c.1904.



C. W. Mathers

Children picking berries in the mission garden at Fort Providence on the Mackenzie, c.1880.



HBC Collection

Harvesting potatoes at the Fort Providence mission, c.1880.



HBC Collection

## TUESDAY — 28th June

This has been a lovely day but, if anything, a little too warm. In the early morning there was a faint ripple on the water, but the gentle breeze soon faded away and the river shone like a mirror. By noon a group of snow-white buildings were observed glittering in the bright sun and drooping from a couple of flagstaves were the flags of the Company and the Roman Catholic Mission. A few minutes afterwards, the *Wrigley* cast anchor below Fort Good Hope. The post stands on a knoll on the east bank of the river and is beautifully situated, a pretty wooded slope lying behind the fort making a fitting background to a charming picture. Although only 14 miles south of the Arctic Circle, potatoes and other vegetables are raised here and reach a fair state of maturity. Cattle and domestic fowls are also kept and do well. Wild fruits such as strawberries, cranberries, blue berries, Saskatoon berries, moss berries and raspberries grow abundantly. I plucked a number of wild roses in full bloom and also gathered several varieties of other wild flowers which were growing profusely.

Before coming to Fort Good Hope we passed through what is known as the Ramparts of the Mackenzie where the river suddenly narrows and flows swiftly for a mile through a channel flanked on either side with high perpendicular walls of limestone. Nature has shaped the rocks on the top of the cliffs into a variety of forms, some resembling towers and battlements and others the ruins of old castles. One mass of rock in particular attracted our attention from its sphinx-like appear-

ance. The river is over sixty fathoms deep in the channel.

The Roman Catholic Church at Good Hope is a wonderful sight in the far North. The interior of the building is beautifully carved and exquisitely painted, great care and pains having been taken in its decoration. The work, we were informed, was that of one of the priests [Brother Ancel] who had devoted many years of his life to it.

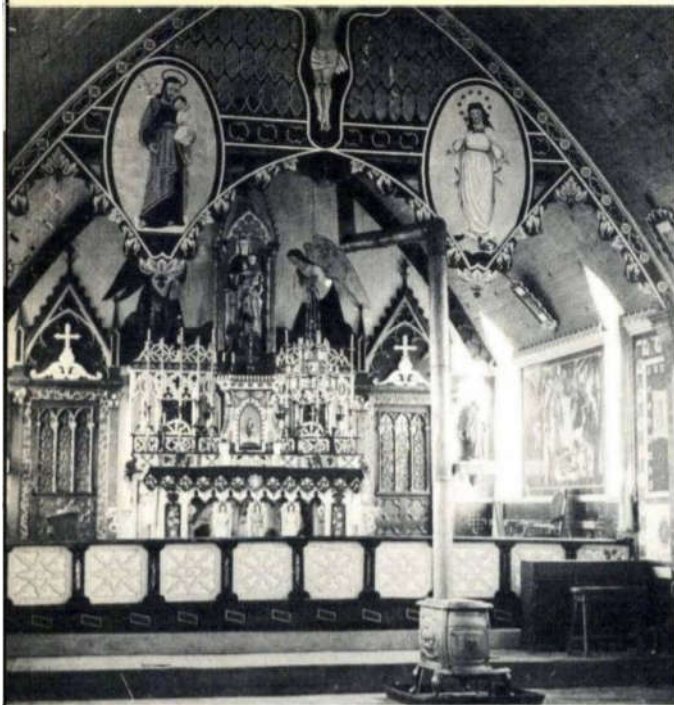
At six in the evening Fort Good Hope is left behind and an hour afterwards, we cross the imaginary line but no Neptune, or hyperborean monarch, stepped on board to question our business in those latitudes, or to exact tribute. The weather was sublime and overhead there was a clear blue sky.

#### WEDNESDAY — 29th June

About eleven o'clock this forenoon while steaming downstream, we sighted a band of Loucheux Indians camped on the shore and fluttering from a long pole in their midst was a H.B.C. flag, which indicated to us that some of the Company's people were there. On landing we made acquaintance with the first of the Loucheux tribe that we had met. The Loucheux inhabit the country adjoining the coast and are the most northerly tribe of Indians. The Esquimaux live to the north of them along the shores of the Arctic Ocean. The band were much interested with the steamer as it was the first craft of that description they had seen and whenever the whistle was sounded, considerable uneasiness seemed to prevail among them. One of the Company's men from the post at Peel River, who knew the river well, awaited us here to act as pilot the rest of the way. Having distributed some tobacco among the Indians and secured a couple of photographs, we carried on again and at one o'clock the entrance to Peel River was reached where we found a large band of Esquimaux encamped. They had been up to the fort to trade and having heard that we were expected shortly, had delayed their return to the coast until our arrival. The steamer was stopped and immediately we were surrounded by kayaks, the peculiar shaped canoe of the Esquimaux. Each boat contained one man and it was with much interest we watched the dexterity displayed by the occupants in handling their fragile crafts. The women also came off to visit us in the large skin boats in which the Eskimo and his family travel and which contain all their worldly goods and chattels. Having presented them with some tobacco we held on our way and at five in the afternoon, reached the fort situated about 30 miles up Peel River. There were some hundreds of Indians and Esquimaux on the banks and on landing, the ceremony of shaking hands with nearly all had to be gone through. Pow-wows, through an interpreter, were held with the Loucheux and Esquimaux and a quantity of tobacco was presented to the

respective chiefs to be divided among their men. After this the Esquimaux gave a dance in honour of the Commissioner which was more energetic than pleasant. The dancing was kept up to the beating of instruments made of skins, something like tambourines or tomtoms. The men or women who were not dancing accompanied this din by a monotonous singing not unlike a Gregorian chant. The performance consisted of a series of leaps and bounds and the striking of tragic attitudes, being in every way totally dissimilar to any exhibitions of the terpsichorean art that we had ever witnessed. Each dancer 'hoed it down' until he worked himself into a state of frenzy and apparently became quite exhausted. They kept up their dance all through the night, if night it could be called, as the sun at midnight was a considerable distance above the horizon.

We were much struck with the physique of the Esquimaux. The men are tall and stalwart and the finest specimens of the 'untutored savage' that I have ever beheld. The women on the other hand are below the medium height, but both sexes are fat and well favoured which is accounted for, no doubt, by the important part seal oil and blubber form in their diet. The general idea of an Eskimo is a short, squat figure and the nomads who roam along the eastern shores of this North American Continent, I believe, are of small stature but I do not think a more powerful and savage looking race of men can be found than those met here. The hideous lip ornaments worn by the men help to add to their fierce looks. Holes are made in each side of the lower lip in which ivory buttons, varying from the size of a large bean to as large as that of a silver dollar, are inserted after the manner of a stud. If the wearer can afford it, a valuable stone of a light green or blue colour is also set into the button-shaped ornament. Their clothing is composed entirely of skins and that of the women differs but slightly from that of the men. A man's suit consists of a coat with a hood and trousers and boots. The coats are of deerskin made with a long peaked skirt before and behind and belted round the waist. Many of the dresses were decorated with beads and ornaments of ivory bone. The complexion of these people is nearly white but their hair is jet black. They are a troublesome class to trade with and some years ago the Company never admitted more than one at the time inside the stockades of the fort, as they are said to be treacherous and cannot be relied upon. The way in which they stalk around carrying their long glittering two-edged knives in their hands gives a person a rather uncanny feeling. The Loucheux were formerly their deadly enemies, and even yet whenever the Esquimaux make their periodic visits to the fort, the Indians are prepared in case of trouble. Without guns, the Loucheux would be no match for their more formidable opponents, but the Esquimaux



The interior of the Roman Catholic church at Fort Good Hope, adorned with black-haired, brown-skinned angels, cherubim and seraphim by Father Petitot and Brother Ancel, for their Indian congregation. Photograph by V.C.M. Christie, 1921.

'Receiving supplies at Fort McPherson, Peel River.' c.1891.



J. McDougall, HBC Collection



'Esquimaux at Peel River'. In the foreground is a kayak, 'the peculiar shaped canoe of the Esquimaux.' c.1891.

have but few guns, their weapons being spears, bows and arrows, and the long knives already mentioned. Of morals and religion they know nothing and they are very uncleanly. What little efforts have been made by the missionaries to civilize them have been totally unsuccessful. Altogether, they were by far the most interesting class of savages met with in our travels and we were fortunate that our visit had happened just at the time when they come to the fort to trade; a few days later and they would have been gone. The Commissioner's son took several photographs of the Indians and Esquimaux at midnight when the sun was at its lowest point. To go to bed was out of the question as

everybody was stirring about the fort as if it were during the day, so I moved around until five o'clock on Thursday morning, when I retired for a short sleep.

Besides the Company's people an English Church missionary and his wife are resident at this remote place. No cattle or poultry are kept here and no vegetables of any kind can be raised. The hardy pine and poplar, however, grow along the banks of the river, but are somewhat stunted in appearance. ♦

*Part III: The return from Peel River to Winnipeg, by Fort McMurray. Ile à la Crosse, Fort Carlton and Fort Qu'Appelle will be described in the Autumn 1985 issue of The Beaver.*

# Stan Hill: Bone Carver

By Susan Hallett

EVERY SUMMER, Iroquois artist Stan Hill brings his bone carvings and his family to the Canada Canoe Festival on Victoria Island, a small green island in the middle of the Ottawa River half-way between Hull in Quebec and Ottawa. It is an annual event which coincides with the yearly celebration of Canada's birthday on Parliament Hill; it attracts crowds interested in the days of the voyageurs and modes of water transportation. There are exhibition games of lacrosse, Canada's national sport; Indian arts and crafts displays, and special attractions such as the Durham boat used on Canada's waterways from 1809 until the 1850s.

Stan Hill, born on the Six Nations Reserve at Ohsweken, Ontario, began to carve seriously only five years ago. He had been an iron-worker for many years, and had advanced in his work to become co-owner of a steel erection company. After the tragic death of one of his four sons, he took stock of his life, and decided that he did not like steel work. When he tried bone carving, a traditional art with the Woodland Indians, he found that 'after doing a few carvings the bones and antlers seemed to come alive. A whole new world opened to me. It appeared that any discarded bone could be transferred into a life-like object of beauty.'

Historically, the Woodland Indians were very artistic carvers. They used antlers to carve effigy bowls, delicate combs with stylized animal and human forms, arrow heads, awls and small human figures. This tradition of carving bone dates back thousands of years, and it has been found that some bone, antler and ivory carvings date back at least 20,000 years.

Antlers from deer were made into intricately carved tool handles. Sections of horn were used in games of chance, some of which were carved or painted, and the flat palm of moose antler was carved into handsome tobacco trays, some having incised ornamentation. Musical instruments were often made of snapping turtle shell, deer hooves or sections of buffalo or cow horn.

Stan Hill uses a contemporary electric etching tool to carve the antlers of moose which an Indian woman gathers for him in Conne River, Newfoundland; he is entirely self-taught. His art reflects his life, depicting a cultural background rich in legends about man's relationship with the natural world.

According to oral tradition, the Iroquois migrated around A.D. 1400 from the south and west (possibly

Ohio) and settled in the region south and east of Lake Ontario in the Valley of the Mohawk River. When the Iroquois Confederacy was formed, the Peacemaker planted a tall pine tree, called the 'Great Tree of Peace' symbolizing the Great Law of Peace. It is believed that peace will always remain strong if the Hodenosaunee (which the Iroquois people call themselves) continue to believe in the message of peace. Just as the pine tree is always green, peace, too, will be everlasting.

The original fifty chiefs of the Iroquois Confederacy stood in a circle around the Tree of Peace, where future council meetings were to be held, and as they stood there, an eagle landed on top of the Great Tree. The Peacemaker therefore appointed the eagle as the Protector of Peace, the guardian of the Hodenosaunee. Each chief was given a fan made from the wing of an eagle to symbolize his duty to keep the peace. They used the fans to sweep away threats to this Great Peace, and all Hodenosaunee men wear eagle feathers on their head-dresses at festival time and special ceremonies to represent the protective power of the eagle.

Hill often depicts ancient Iroquois legends in his award-winning work. The *Iroquois Tree of Peace and the Nine Clans*, a moose antler carving in the collection of contemporary Indian art at Rideau Hall, illustrates the legend of the 'Great Tree of Peace'. It is a theme present in many of Hill's carvings, as are the clanship symbols that thread throughout contemporary Indian life.

The clanship system is based on female ancestry. There are nine clans, named after woodland animals: Hawk, Heron, Snipe, Turtle, Wolf, Bear, Beaver, Elk and Deer. Each clan represents a group of families related through their female blood line, with children belonging to their mother's clan. Each nation has a different number of clans, but they all include the Turtle, Bear and Wolf Clans.

As Woodland people have always looked to nature for inspiration, the clans honour the various animal beings which share their land. Clan animals were always painted above the entrance to each longhouse, and they formed an important element in Iroquois art.

Stan Hill, who has had exhibits of his work in major cities in Canada and the United States, continues in this tradition.

His bone carvings may be seen by writing to him on the Six Nations Reserve, Ohsweken, Ontario N0A 1M0. ♦

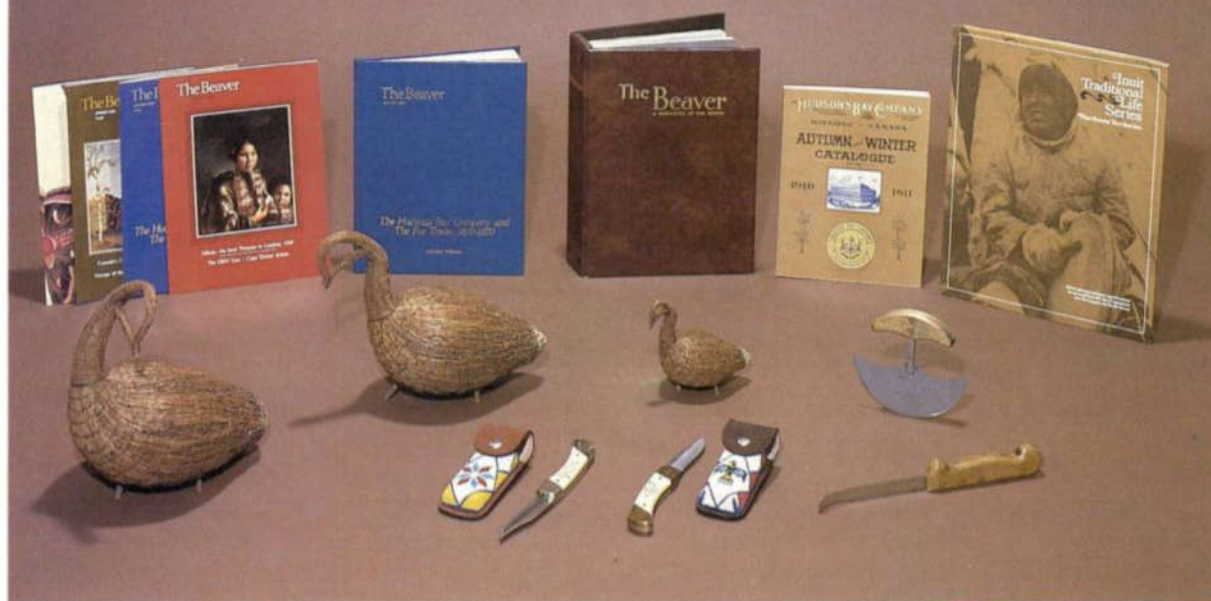
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*Susan Hallett, of Montreal and Ottawa, is a writer and a media relations specialist.*

*Iroquois Tree of Peace  
and the Nine Clans.  
Carved from moose antler  
by Stan Hill.*



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# NORTHERN BOOKS

## GUNBOAT FRONTIER:

British Maritime Authority and  
Northwest Coast Indians, 1846-1890.

By Barry M. Gough. University of  
British Columbia Press, Vancouver,  
1984. 287 pp., illus. \$27.95.

Reviewed by H. Keith Ralston

The title of Professor Gough's latest work, but particularly the dust jacket of the volume with its warships shelling a forested shoreline and sailors and marines rowing towards the beach, carried me irresistibly back to a youth spent in the afterglow of the British Empire. The author's declaration on the very first page of the preface that he had examined 'every creek mouth and cove' of the scenes of naval action, further convinced me that here was a latter-day G. A. Henty — that this was another in a long tradition of adventure books, and that indeed it should have been titled 'By Creek Mouth and Cove: with the Royal Navy on the Northwest Coast'.

Alas for my expectations of rollicking tales of derring-do, it was truly 'every creek mouth and cove' — an examination, in measured academic prose and with detail to the point of tedium, of every action of the Royal Navy in support of the civil power that involved indigenous peoples. This is not a new locale for Gough — he has two previous books: *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America 1810-1914* (1971) and *Distant Dominion: Britain and the Northwest Coast of North America, 1579-1809* (1980). He justifies the present volume by arguing that, like his first book, it is based on the Admiralty records, 'the last hitherto unused major corpus of documentary materials to tell about the Northwest Coast Indian life in the nineteenth century'.

The volume is divided into three parts: 'Company and Colony' deals with the Colony of Vancouver Island during the proprietorship of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1849-1859; 'Putting Out Fires' with the subsequent period in Vancouver Island

to 1866 plus the colonial period of British Columbia to 1871; and 'Extending the Frontier' with Canadian jurisdiction after 1871.

Gough's strength is in his detailed treatment of events, based on his knowledge of the Admiralty records. He is, however, much less convincing in his attempts to create a theoretical framework for his narrative. His analysis of British Indian policy is sketchy. He says that policy was to 'extend the rule of law and order', that it was reactive — 'send a gunboat' or in the more sophisticated language of political science, 'crisis management'. But such policy statements, he argues, were 'merely declarations of intent' — the specifics were to be determined by 'the man on the spot', a concept put forward by American scholar Philip Curtin. Gough, therefore, places a good deal of emphasis on the personalities of colonial governors and others in authority, a traditional stance in Canadian historiography.

For readers of *The Beaver*, Gough's thesis might best be illus-

trated by his discussion of incidents on Vancouver Island in the 1850s. Gough devotes a chapter to events surrounding the destruction in 1851 by the Royal Navy of a Newwitty village near the Hudson's Bay Company port of Fort Rupert on northern Vancouver Island. Richard Blanshard, the governor of the colony, was literally 'on the spot' aboard HMS *Daphne* when the Newwitty tribe failed to surrender the murderers of three seamen, deserters from the HBC ship *Norman Morrison*. Gough argues that Blanshard in this episode began a policy 'honed' by his successor James Douglas. Douglas in 1851 was still Chief Factor and Senior Member of the Board of Management of the Columbia District, stationed at Fort Victoria.

Gough takes issue with fellow historian Robin Fisher who, in *Contact and Conflict*, calls the reprisal a 'brutal action' which he blames on Blanshard and argues was opposed by Douglas. Gough denies that there was any difference in policy between Blanshard and Douglas and says of Fisher's argument 'to lionize Douglas at Blanshard's expense is a mistake. Douglas shared Blanshard's concerns ... More specifically he did not think Blanshard's actions against the Newwitty either ill-founded or excessive.'

In all of this, it is surprising that Gough did not turn to Douglas himself. Douglas's statement of his differences with the Blanshard policy are on the record and specifically of this episode. They were summarized by Fisher but are available to Gough in full in the Fort Victoria correspondence inward to London in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives and, since 1982, in a printed version in the *Fort Victoria Letters 1846-1851* (Hudson's Bay Record Society vol. 32). There Douglas, called to account by London, sets forth his position:

A few of the 'Newwete' indians are alone concerned in the murder of the seamen, and the difficulty with them did not lead

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to any breach of the peaceful relations existing with the Quak-  
colth tribes inhabiting the Fort  
Rupert District. In all our inter-  
course with the Natives, we have  
invariably acted on the principle  
that it is inexpedient and unjust  
to hold *tribes* responsible for the  
acts of *individuals*; — that being  
without law or government every  
native should be responsible only  
for his own acts; and not for the  
acts of any other member of the  
tribe, unless they espouse the  
cause and take up arms in de-  
fence of criminals. I recommended,  
that course to Governor Blan-  
shard and Captain Wellesly when  
they decided on proceeding to  
Fort Rupert, but my advice was  
followed but in part; as the Tribe  
was attacked because they *could*  
not surrender the criminals. No  
lives were lost on either side in  
the attacks made on these indians,  
but the demonstration has never-  
theless had a salutary effect; as  
the 'Neweetes' are in a state of  
great alarm and have promised to  
deliver the murderers to the first  
Ship of War which arrives on the  
Coast. (J.D. underlinings)

[Douglas to Barclay, 16 April 1851;  
*Fort Victoria Letters*, p. 176.]

This is, of course, a quite differ-  
ent policy than that of Blanshard  
who, says Gough, 'believed that if  
the murderers were not given up,  
the tribe should be punished *as a*  
*group* — a tactic which the British  
believed the Indians understood and  
used in their own warfare'. [Gough's  
italics] (p.44).

If further proof is needed of the  
difference in policies, it is provided  
by Gough's own account of two fur-  
ther sets of difficulties with the  
Indians at Cowichan in 1853. In  
both cases, individuals were taken  
and punished. Douglas, by then  
Governor of Vancouver Island, cou-  
rageously exposed himself to pos-  
sible death to make sure that the  
Cowichans gave up those persons  
who had committed acts of violence.  
Perhaps Professor Gough's treat-  
ment might have been more bal-  
anced if he had been more fami-  
liar with the Hudson's Bay Company  
records — another, and still under-  
used, 'major corpus of documentary  
materials' on Indian life.

*H. Keith Ralston teaches history at  
the University of British Columbia.*

#### SWIFT RUNNER

By Colin A. Thomson. Detselig  
Enterprises, Ltd., Calgary, 1984.  
114 pp., illus. \$17.95.

*Reviewed by Louis Marano*

Late in the fall of 1878, a Cree  
named Kakisikutchin (which has  
been rendered into English as Swift  
Runner), his wife, six children,  
mother and brother broke off from  
a larger Cree group that included  
his father-in-law at Long Lake,  
about 70 miles northeast of Edmon-  
ton. According to his father-in-law's  
later court testimony, Swift Runner  
stated that his party would be  
travelling toward Athabaska Land-  
ing, which was about 30 miles  
northwest of Long Lake and where  
there was a Hudson's Bay Company  
post. Swift Runner, his brother and  
eldest son were able hunters pos-  
sessing guns and ammunition. All  
ten seemed to be in good health.

Swift Runner appeared alone the  
following spring at the Egg Lake  
Indian settlement saying that his  
family had starved because he had  
been sick and could not move. Two  
of his children had died, he said. His  
wife had then committed suicide and  
the rest of his family had left him.

The Indians apparently notified  
the Northwest Mounted Police, who  
arrested him. Swift Runner at first

claimed innocence of any wrong-  
doing and offered to lead the police  
to the graves of his wife and chil-  
dren. On 4 June 1879, a party led  
by Inspector Severe Gagnon and  
which included interpreter George  
Washington Brazeau and police  
physician George Herchmer, left  
Fort Saskatchewan and travelled  
about 40 miles north on the Atha-  
baska Road. On the morning of 5  
June they forked off to the left at  
the prisoner's guidance.

After entering the woods, Swift  
Runner apparently pretended to be  
lost, but after about five hours he  
led the police to the grave of his  
eldest son. The police exhumed the  
body of an Indian male, about 15  
years old, who had been carefully  
buried. Dr Herchmer's examination  
indicated that the boy had been  
severely emaciated, but his body  
showed no signs of having received  
foul play in life. According to  
Inspector Gagnon, Swift Runner  
'showed grief at this grave'.

Police testimony indicates that  
Swift Runner again feigned disori-  
entation, but under close questioning  
the prisoner led them on the morn-  
ing of 6 June to two campsites about  
100 yards apart. Here there were  
no graves, but four human skulls,  
scraps of woman's clothing, some  
entrails and hair. There were a large  
number of human bones, some in  
the campfire ashes, all of which had  
been boiled. Here Swift Runner  
retrieved a kettle, a firebag and some  
traps he had hidden at the site.

Swift Runner was held at Fort  
Saskatchewan where he made a vol-  
untary confession on 15 June 1879  
saying that he killed his second-el-  
dest son before the eldest died of  
starvation and that he killed the  
others in stages except for his mother  
and brother who apparently struck  
off on their own (whether before or  
after the killings began is unclear)  
and of whose fate he was ignorant.  
He was tried for murder at Fort  
Saskatchewan on 6 August 1879,  
found guilty, and hanged there on  
20 December of that year.

Colin A. Thomson, of the Uni-  
versity of Lethbridge, has written a  
book on the Swift Runner incident  
in which he draws his narrative from  
historical fragments, filling in the

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## End of an Era

This issue marks the end of an era for *The Beaver*, as Helen Burgess will retire this summer after 13 years of accomplishment as Editor.

*The Beaver* has been well served by a number of outstanding editors, including Douglas MacKay, Clifford Wilson, Malvina Bolus and Helen Burgess, each of whom left an individual impression on the publication. Throughout her tenure, Helen Burgess preserved and enriched the traditions of *The Beaver*: she broadened its subject range, placing a greater emphasis on social history.

In awarding its 1979 Regional History Prize, the Canadian Historical Association said of *The Beaver*, 'Its great range of subject matter, its attractive design and its service both to scholarship and to popular history attest to its success as a vehicle for exploring the history of Northern and Western Canada.'

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We endorse this fine accolade, and extend to Helen our appreciation of her dedication and professionalism. We wish her a long and rewarding retirement, which is well-deserved.

We shall welcome a new Editor in our Autumn issue: Christopher Dafoe, a distinguished journalist already well known to many of our readers through his work for the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Vancouver Sun*.

We are also pleased to announce that *The Beaver* will be published bi-monthly, beginning in 1986. We hope you, our readers, will enjoy receiving 50 per cent more Beaver material as much as we shall enjoy bringing it to you.

A. Rolph Huband,  
Vice President and Secretary,  
Hudson's Bay Company

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considerable gaps with fanciful reconstruction. He does not deal with the problem of sorting his historical sources into different levels of reliability, nor does he distinguish historical sources of whatever quality from the fruits of his imagination. In short, Thomson has written a 'novelization' of the Swift Runner case in historical guise.

The best single source on the case, from which the facts at the beginning of this review are extracted, is a 58-page Department of Justice file, Record Group 13, C-1, Vol. 1417, in the Public Archives of Canada. If Thomson has not read this source, it is a serious omission that could explain many other shortcomings. There are hints in the book that Thomson probably has read the file, but he does not cite it and, in some ways, gives it less weight than his fictionalization. For example, in inventing a life history for Swift Runner, Thomson assigns the Cree's wife the name 'Sun-on-the-Mountain', adding in a note that her actual name is unknown. In fact, it was Charlotte.

Thomson explains Swift Runner's cannibalism by recourse to the discredited anthropological artifact 'windigo psychosis' which is a belief

among academics that the Cree and Ojibwa are, for reasons peculiar to their culture, subject to a bizarre form of mental illness that compels them to eat human flesh. Actually, windigo psychosis was invented between 1933 and 1938 by anthropologists seeking to explain informant accounts of executions that had taken place years before. Indians told ethnographers that it had been necessary to kill certain people because those individuals had become possessed by the spirit of the Windigo cannibal-monster. The informants said that unless those so possessed were executed they would have killed and eaten the whole group. In fact, the Indian belief in cannibal-possession was probably a rationale for senilicide, euthanasia, scapegoating, or the elimination of the burdensome or disruptive.

Thomson comes closest to success in his attempt to explain the deteriorating resource base that the Western Cree had to face in the nineteenth century, as well as the effects of European diseases, alcohol, and the political economy of the dominant white culture. These factors, indeed, could explain both the starvation that motivated Swift Runner's crime and the cultural

elaboration of the belief in cannibal-possession among the Cree. Even here, however, the reader must guess where history leaves off and fiction begins. In his conflation of history and literature Thomson has done justice to neither.

*Louis Marano, an anthropologist who has worked among the Cree and Ojibwa of northern Manitoba and Ontario, is on the copy desk of 'The Washington Times', Washington, D.C.*

### SOMETIMES A GREAT NATION A Photo Album of Canada 1850-1925

By Edward Cavell, Altitude Publishing Ltd., Banff, 1984. 207 pp., illus. \$49.95.

*Reviewed by Elizabeth Blight*

'This is not a history.' This opening statement in Edward Cavell's introduction (and the only substantial text) to his latest book, *Sometimes a Great Nation*, is certainly true. Intended to give an overview of both the history of Canada and the history of photography, these 13 pages are full of historical and often contradictory clichés and overgen-

eralizations. Belying the title, the author presents a negative concept of this country with which he claims to have a love affair. It can be summed up in one sentence, on page 8. 'We are a nation of losers, joined, through immigration, by the victims and vanquished of almost every other country in the world'.

This reviewer was most disappointed that there were no photographs to illustrate one of the most incongruous overgeneralizations (page 13): 'One of the strongest cultural influences in the Canadian West was the myth of the American Wild West. The new settlers joyfully indulged in the ever-popular pastime of dressing up and play acting at being cowboy desperadoes'.

Even in his field of expertise, photography, Cavell continues to irritate. On page 16 he tells the reader that 'photography became an essential record of everyday life . . . from major historical events to the minor triumphs of ordinary folk', only to contradict himself two pages later with 'photography . . . was the exclusive property of the middle and upper classes'.

The reader would be well advised to skip the introduction and proceed to the main body of the book.

What the book is, is an eclectic and personal selection of 192 vintage photographs, many published here for the first time, that appealed in some way to the author who is currently Curator of Photography at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff, Alberta. Chosen from the photograph collections of over 15 of Canada's major archives, museums and galleries this 'family album' covers the period from 1850 to 1925.

The images range from the ordinary — Frederick Dally's photograph of the residence of Guy Tuttle

at Yale B.C., c.1870; through the whimsical — Hannah Maynard's Studio fantasy; to the stunning — Alexander Henderson's 1876 view of Montmorency Falls.

Almost all the photographs make superb people watching. There are people at work: workers building the Intercolonial Railway in Nova Scotia in 1871, women sorting copper ore in Quebec in 1867, or a munitions factory in Ontario in 1918. There are people at play: baseball in Toronto in 1915 or a tourist visiting Niagara Falls in 1860. Some photographs touch the heart and others simply amuse.

Cavell has taken care to ensure that all regions of Canada are covered. Justifiably the works of many of Canada's best known photographers are represented in this volume — some many times over. While appreciating the difficulty Cavell faced in selecting a limited number of photographs from the thousands he had to choose from, I would like to have seen more of the work of some of the lesser known regional photographers.

*Sometimes a Great Nation* is essentially of and about photographs and apparent effort has been taken, not only to show the image but to reproduce the inherent substance and beauty of each photograph. We experience the warmth of the albumen prints and the delicacy of the hand-tinted ambrotypes and lantern slides. There is an amazing variation in the tone and texture of what is commonly thought of as a black and white medium. The layout is of simple design to allow the photographs to speak for themselves. Each is accompanied by a brief description. When known the photographer is cited often with a biographical note, a practice commonly overlooked in most books. What is lacking to make this book a more useful reference tool is an index.

*Sometimes a Great Nation* is not a history. It is a book for those who enjoy the beauty of vintage photographs and wish a glimpse into our 'pool of visual heritage'.

*Elizabeth Blight is Head, Still Images Section, Provincial Archives of Manitoba.*

## PAST AND PRESENT VEGETATION OF THE FAR NORTHWEST OF CANADA

By J. C. Ritchie. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1984. 251 pp., illus. \$35.00.

*Reviewed by Erika E. Gaertner*

The discussion in this text focuses on approximately 220,000 square kilometres around the Mackenzie delta where Ritchie has conducted his research over the last fifteen years.

After a preface and introduction he discusses in the six chapters, 'The Physical Setting': climate, geology, permafrost and periglacial features of the region; 'Vascular Plant Floristics', the modern vegetation, particularly in the Beringian concept, as it relates to North America



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and Siberia; 'Vegetation History', the longest chapter in the book, where the origin and progress of plants is traced from the Tertiary through early, middle and late Pleistocene to the Holocene. Pollen profiles, both original and previously published, provide the principal base for this discussion. Yet any conclusions are reserved for the 'Paleoenvironmental Reconstruction', where the various hypotheses on the development through the ages, as presented by various authors, is closely examined.

Ritchie's conclusion is that the paleobotanical data here assembled provide the first convincing corroboration from North America of the early Holocene thermal maximum. Implications of the paleobotanical

record of topographic diversity in relation to paleoecology together with suggestions for future explorations are treated under 'Current Problems and Future Trends'.

A list of the present-day vascular plants of the regions, tabular summaries, description of field and laboratory methods employed, and a listing of the radiocarbon age determination that were discussed in the text are presented in the appendix.

Twenty-eight plates, mostly photographs by the author, illustrate various aspects of the terrain. An extensive up-to-date list of references accompanies the text. It should be invaluable to students who look to the North while interested in the past history of vegetation and

plant association. The length of this list is in sharp contrast to the relatively brief index. A detailed index would make this interesting work more accessible as a reference or a classroom text. Perhaps Ritchie should not presume that only those well acquainted with paleobotany, paleoecology and the Far North will peruse his book.

It would be helpful, if he presented in the introduction a general map of the landmass above the sixtieth parallel rather than the one of the relatively limited area adjacent to the Beaufort sea.

*Dr Erika Gaertner, a graduate of the Ontario Agricultural College and Cornell University, is an economic botanist, now lecturing at Concordia University in Montreal.*

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